

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON MANCHESTER CAPACITY RECOVERY

Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users. We are responding to this consultation through drawing together the views of members from the Lincolnshire, North East, North West and Yorkshire branches and affiliated Rail User Groups and as authorised by Railfuture's national Board of Directors.

Before the May 2018 timetable changes, there were proposals to enhance reliability and performance along the Castlefield corridor, including:

- Additional through platforms (P15 & 16) at Manchester Piccadilly, and
- Improved layout at Manchester Oxford Road.

Neither of the above have been implemented, leaving capacity limitations that have led to this consultation. We question whether the economic and social costs arising from the severe disruption arising from the 2018 timetable changes have been fully considered in assessing costs and benefits of these proposed upgrades.

The present consultation proposals to create a workable timetable require reductions in through services so that the remaining trains have a smooth passage. In the medium term, major infrastructure works will be required to create a railway fit for present and future decades as society recovers from the Covid pandemic. We therefore ask that, in parallel with these short-term timetable proposals:

- a) planned electrification Manchester Victoria-Stalybridge be completed urgently. As well as supporting decarbonisation, this will increase timetable options by enabling electric-only trains to operate beyond Manchester Victoria to a regular terminating station avoiding congesting Manchester Victoria.
- b) all existing infrastructure proposals to relieve congestion be looked at urgently, including:
 - those mentioned in the consultation document;
 - detailed plans promoted by Railfuture for an alternative rail route for Trafford Park freight trains¹;
 - options for grade separation to remove conflicts at Ordsall Lane and Slade Lane and elsewhere;
 - smaller changes, such as track/signaling enhancements around Manchester Victoria (Deal St to Miles Platting) to facilitate more parallel movements, or at Oxford Road to remove conflicts due to terminating services.

We understand the Piccadilly P15/16 Oxford Road project is still awaiting approval from the Secretary of State. Our view is that to meet the challenge of the climate emergency, attracting passengers back to environmentally sustainable transport as we rebuild after Covid, the railway must offer reliable, consistent and comprehensive services meeting a larger range of travel needs. Medium-term, train frequency and range of destinations must increase.

So, whilst we welcome these attempts to stabilise timetable and train performance, we stress that they are only short-term, interim measures.

Responding to the questions below, we stress the importance, for passengers across the North-West and Yorkshire, of the Castlefield corridor in giving access to universities, colleges, hospitals, other employment, leisure attractions and onward connections. For most of the routes listed, we propose a modified version of Option C, (Option C1) which we believe would provide the best compromise in optimising travel opportunities from significantly more points of origin. The opportunity must be taken to include flows that were not served in the December 2019 timetable, but which had been promised when the Ordsall Chord was built, and we think this can be achieved without compromising the consultation's aims. See answers to question 4 below.

The overall aim must be fair treatment of different routes that need services to the south side of Manchester.

Question 1: Do you support the aim of standardising and simplifying service patterns if this will significantly improve train performance? – Yes, but note this is something of a closed question (who would not support standardising and simplifying if it would improve train performance).

Question 2: Do you support the approach of measuring service level and performance impacts across all passengers to allow fair trade-offs between options? Measure service level/performance impacts to a certain extent, but trade-offs have to be fair, we think many of the proposals are far from fair, our key point is that long distance intercity services from across the north of England (e.g. Newcastle to Manchester Airport) seem to take priority over reliable local services in these proposals, such that for instance you are cutting off a whole swathe of North West Manchester stations from any DIRECT travel to the south of Manchester city centre whilst preserving through journeys on the long distance ones

¹ See report at [display2302 \(railfuture.org.uk\)](https://display2302.railfuture.org.uk) in [Railfuture | Relieving Castlefield](#)

Question 3: On the basis of these results which is your preferred option? We think none of the three Options meets a target of improving reliability for the highest number of passengers, but we suggest **an adjusted Option C (labelled as Option C1 in our answers)** which would make more through journeys available on key routes, without compromising the aims of reducing the number of trains through the Castlefield corridor, see our response route by route below for details.

Question 4 Please provide your views on the details of the proposed changes which are detailed by route in the appendix.

Liverpool to Manchester via Warrington Central

Option C1 replacing the Liverpool - Cleethorpes service with Liverpool – Manchester Airport as we mention under the Manchester – Sheffield via Hope Valley route, changes in bold listed below for clarity.

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 fast train per hour between Liverpool and Manchester Airport, via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly, calling at larger intermediate stations such as Birchwood, Irlam and Urmston. • 1 fast train per hour between Liverpool and Nottingham, via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly. • In peak periods, 2 stopping trains per hour between Warrington and Manchester Oxford Road, calling all stations. • Off-peak, 1 stopping train per hour between Warrington and Manchester Oxford Road calling at all stations. • 2 trains per hour between Liverpool and Warrington Central calling at all stations.
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Liverpool & Wigan to Manchester via Eccles

Option C1, diverting one of the two Leeds - Chester via Victoria services to Manchester Airport to provide direct services from Calder Valley stations, and extend, the Huddersfield Manchester service to Chester via Victoria (see Huddersfield – Manchester service), changes in bold listed below for clarity.

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 fast trains per hour from Liverpool to Manchester Victoria, on to Leeds via Huddersfield. • 1 train per hour from Chester to Leeds, via Manchester Victoria and Halifax. • 1 train per hour from Chester to Huddersfield via Manchester Victoria • 1 stopping train per hour from Liverpool to Manchester Oxford Road via Newton-le-Willows. • 1 stopping train per hour from Liverpool to Manchester Victoria (peak periods only). • 1 fast train per hour from Wigan North Western to Hazel Grove (peak periods only) via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.
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Wigan to Manchester via Atherton and Westhoughton

Option C1 - see our note against Preston to Manchester via Chorley, we think one of the Southport – Stalybridge services should go to south Manchester in place of one the two Blackpool – Manchester Airport services which would be diverted instead to Stalybridge. This would have the dual effect of keeping through services to Piccadilly/beyond for Southport line and also restore a Wigan – Manchester south side service off peak service, obviating the need for a peak Wigan – Oxford Road service, although as the changes we have suggested elsewhere result in the reduction of the need for other services terminating at Oxford Road, a peak only service from Wigan to Oxford Road via Atherton could be accommodated. Changes in bold listed below for clarity.

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 train per hour from Southport to Stalybridge via Westhoughton and Manchester Victoria. • 1 train per hour from Southport via Westhoughton to Alderley Edge • 1 train per hour from Wigan to Leeds via Atherton, Manchester Victoria and Dewsbury. • 1 train per hour from Kirkby to Blackburn via Atherton, Manchester Victoria and Burnley. • In the peak periods, 1 train per hour from Wigan to Manchester Oxford Road, via Atherton, running semi-fast.
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Preston to Manchester (via Chorley)

Option C1, diverting one of the two per hour Blackpool – Manchester Airport services to Stalybridge instead of Southport – Stalybridge as per Wigan to Manchester via Atherton and Westhoughton routes above, this

would also return an off peak, direct Preston – Victoria service which was removed in all options and we think is key to retaining local connectivity. This should remove the need for a separate Preston – Victoria peak only service, although the overall number of carriages on the route will need to be looked at.

The hourly TPE long distance Scottish service has no need to call at Chorley as its basically an inter-city service, and as such, needs only to call at stations important to this type of traffic flow. We suggest that the stop at Bolton is also omitted at peak times. In the past, peak hour trains non-stop to Bolton have been overwhelmed by commuters to the extent that longer distance passengers are unable to board. Adequate number of carriages need to be provided on alternate services to meet the needs of local passengers though, perhaps using platform 5 for the local services and let longer distance trains pass (i.e., that the northbound fast services are scheduled to pass the local ones here).

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 fast train per hour from Scotland to Manchester Airport via Bolton, Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly. • 1 fast train per hour from Cumbria to Manchester Airport via Bolton, calling additionally at Buckshaw Parkway, Chorley and Horwich Parkway • 1 stopping train per hour from Blackpool to Manchester Airport via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly. • 1 stopping train per hour from Blackpool to Stalybridge via Manchester Victoria • In the peak periods, 1 stopping train per hour from Preston to Manchester Victoria
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Clitheroe and Blackburn to Manchester via Darwen

Option C which brings a 30-minute service on many intermediate stations

Leeds to Manchester via Rochdale – the Calder Valley route

Option C1, where one of the 2 tph Leeds – Chester via the Calder Valley service is diverted to Manchester Airport, and its path to Chester is taken by a Huddersfield - Manchester service extended to Chester, this could retain the 30-minute service for intermediate stations between Chester and Warrington (Helsby, Frodsham, Runcorn East). This can be enabled by diverting the Newcastle – Manchester Airport service to Piccadilly via Guide Bridge and terminate there, (see later entry under Huddersfield – Manchester service).

This will need co-ordinating of times to make connections, but will ensure 2tph over the Ordsall Chord from Victoria to Piccadilly and improve journey opportunities for more people and would bring about a franchise commitment, changes in bold listed below for clarity.

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 train per hour from Leeds to Chester via Bradford, Manchester Victoria and Warrington Bank Quay. • 1 train per hour from Leeds to Wigan via Dewsbury, Manchester Victoria and Atherton. • 1 train per hour from Blackburn to Kirkby via Manchester Victoria and Atherton. • 2 trains per hour from Rochdale to Blackburn / Clitheroe via Manchester Victoria and Bolton. • 1 train per hour from Leeds to Manchester Airport via Bradford and Manchester Victoria
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Stalybridge to Manchester Victoria

Option C1, note our suggestions (under the Wigan to Manchester via Atherton and Westhoughton routes) for one of the Southport – Stalybridge service to go to Alderley Edge instead, to be replaced by one of the Blackpool-Airport trains to maintain 2tph from Stalybridge to Ashton, Victoria and Salford. Also please see our suggestion under Huddersfield to Manchester, we think that the stopping train to Piccadilly should divert to Chester via Victoria and that the Stalybridge stop (pre-Covid) on the Liverpool – Scarborough is restored, changes in bold listed below for clarity.

Option C1 (trains that call at both Stalybridge and Manchester Victoria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 train per hour from Stalybridge to Southport via Manchester Victoria and Westhoughton (calls at Ashton) • 1 train per hour from Stalybridge to Blackpool via Manchester Victoria and Bolton (calls at Ashton) • 1 train per hour from Huddersfield running all stations to Chester via Victoria (calls at Ashton) • 1 train per hour from Scarborough to Liverpool (non-stop Stalybridge-Manchester Victoria)
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Huddersfield to Manchester via Trans Pennine Main Line

Option C1. We note services at local stations along this route (Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite). continue to be routed to Piccadilly, which is one of the issues arising from the timetable change in 2018, i.e., that long established passenger journeys to Victoria were removed from these local stations. The proposal to have a half-hourly service by adding stops on the Hull – Piccadilly trains will be welcome at those stations, although this change will be seen as a downgrading of Hull's service to Manchester;

However, we also suggest diverting the current Huddersfield – Manchester local all stations service to Chester via Manchester Victoria, so restoring the link to Victoria and offering a new connection without taking any new paths. This could be achieved by diverting the Newcastle – Manchester Airport train, (that only goes as far as Victoria in the peak), to Piccadilly via Guide Bridge and terminate there, with good connections to the Airport and South Manchester throughout the day, summarised in our amended table below.

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 fast trains per hour to Liverpool, from Edinburgh and Scarborough via Manchester Victoria. • 1 stopping train per hour from Huddersfield to Chester via Manchester Victoria. • 1 fast train per hour from Redcar Central to Manchester Airport via Manchester Victoria, Manchester Oxford Road, and Manchester Piccadilly. • 1 fast train per hour from Newcastle to Manchester Piccadilly only via Guide Bridge • 1 train per hour from Hull to Manchester Piccadilly, making local stops between Huddersfield and Stalybridge all day.
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Sheffield to Manchester (via Hope Valley)

Cleethorpes – Manchester Airport; The options that remove Manchester Airport as a destination from Cleethorpes/Doncaster/Sheffield is a significant inconvenience for a region with no airport facilities comparable to Manchester, and given that it's been operating for a good number of years (a long time before the introduction of the Ordsall Chord which helped reduce the number of similar moves at Manchester Piccadilly), it's hard to see why its described as "operationally challenging." We'd like to see this retained with the path through Castlefield taken with a Liverpool – Manchester Airport via Warrington Central (this would retain direct services to Manchester Airport from both Liverpool and Warrington Central).

Northern Powerhouse Rail has promised an additional fast train per hour between Sheffield and Manchester from 2023, this being the primary output arising from substantial investment in the Hope Valley Capacity Improvement Scheme. We believe the consultation should seek to accommodate this additional service, which is central to the Hope Valley investment project. All changes in bold listed below for clarity.

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 stopping train per hour between Manchester Piccadilly and Sheffield. • 1 fast train per hour between Cleethorpes and Manchester Airport via Manchester Piccadilly. • 1 fast train per hour between Nottingham and Liverpool via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.
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South Manchester Local Services

Option C1, amending service to Alderley Edge as noted elsewhere

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 trains per hour from Piccadilly to Crewe via Manchester Airport. • 1 train per hour from Piccadilly to Alderley Edge (2nd service comes from Southport). • 1 train per hour from Piccadilly to Stoke. • 2 trains per hour from Piccadilly to Buxton. • 1 train per hour from Piccadilly to North Wales via Northwich and Chester, running semi-fast. • 1 train per hour from Piccadilly to Chester. • In peak periods, 1 train per hour from Wigan North Western to Hazel Grove. • In peak periods, additional services from Stoke to Piccadilly.
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East Manchester Local Services

Option C preferred
Manchester Airport

Option C1 amended as in previous sections, changes in bold listed below for clarity.

Option C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Glasgow / Edinburgh.• 1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Barrow / Windermere.• 1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Blackpool.• 1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Redcar Central via Leeds.• 1 train per hour from Leeds via Calder Valley/Victoria• 1 train per hour from Liverpool via Warrington Central• 2 trains per hour from Crewe to Manchester Piccadilly.• 1 fast train per hour between Cleethorpes and Manchester Airport via Manchester Piccadilly. <p>(the last three services do not travel the Castlefield corridor so in summary there are 6 tph along the Castlefield corridor to Manchester Airport, with 3 tph from Piccadilly)</p>
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(please see last page for diagrammatic summary of all services proposed through the Castlefield corridor)

Question 5: Where do you usually travel from and to? We are a rail campaigning and user group, and thus we represent the interests of actual and potential passengers living throughout Great Britain, as well as those travelling into the region from other countries via Manchester Airport. Our priority is the needs of those who need to access the corridor on a very regular basis for work, education and leisure purposes

Question 6: How often do you make this journey? We are a rail campaigning and user group, and thus we represent the interests of actual and potential passengers living throughout Great Britain, as well as those travelling into the region from other countries via Manchester Airport. These passengers include the whole range of travel frequency from daily to occasionally.

Question 7: What is the reason for your journey? We are a rail campaigning and user group, and thus we represent the interests of actual and potential passengers living throughout Great Britain, as well as those travelling into the region from other countries via Manchester Airport. These passengers will use the railway for a myriad of reasons, including commuting for work, education and voluntary activities, business travel, and leisure purposes.

For any queries on this response, please contact Trevor Bishop as below.

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Summary of services proposed in our Option C1 in diagram form

