



# LONG TERM RAIL STRATEGY

The framework for how rail in the North of England should be developed over the next twenty years

## SUMMARY

**This Long Term Rail Strategy sets out how the rail network in the North of England can be improved over the next twenty years. It is a long term development plan for rail in the North.**



## SUPPORTING THE NORTH'S ECONOMY

The North of England accounts for 25% of the national economy, that is £311 billion Gross Value Added per year. Its economy is much larger than Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland combined. It is bigger than the individual Scandinavian economies of Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

The Government has said that it wants to re-balance the national economy away from the over-crowded South East and away from an undue reliance on financial services. To achieve this, the North's economy will need to grow at a faster rate than the rest of the country, but at the moment the North underperforms economically in comparison to other parts of the UK. The North lacks economic cohesion and transport is a factor in this.

Rail already plays a vital role in supporting the North's economy. It facilitates commuting (and therefore labour markets), provides business access to London with its World City business services, gives access to the North's port and airport international gateways and carries significant volumes of freight. It helps support the North's retail, leisure and tourism economies. On top of this, it provides a vital social function for many communities.

The economy of the North has changed substantially over the last 30 years from

a reliance on primary and manufacturing industries. New sectors have developed such as biotechnology, information technology and creative industries. To grow in the North these sectors need good business-to-business connectivity within the North, to London and other key business centres in the country and internationally. These new industries, and the growth of the service sector, have seen job growth focused on the North's major urban centres, places attractive for rail-based commuting. To continue to grow these businesses need to be able to attract a workforce from the widest possible area.

Many of the North's towns and cities have seen significant redevelopment over the last decade, making them more attractive leisure destinations and supporting a flourishing retail economy. The five national parks in the North are significant tourism destinations, as are cities such as York and Chester and our coasts. Leisure and tourism are both significant generators of rail travel.

The North is home to 26 universities. As well as being recognised as key drivers of economic growth, they also generate significant travel which is placing new demands on the rail network.

Rail in itself is a significant employer in the North and is itself a key driver enabler of growth in new economic sectors.

## RAIL IN THE NORTH TODAY

The North has a significant rail network. It is served by three north/south inter-city lines, and also by the important cross country and trans-Pennine corridors. Passenger services are provided by ten different franchises and two open access operators. It is an intersection of key national, regional and local flows. There are over 500 stations in the North, a fifth of the national total. Over half the rail freight on the national network travels to or through the North.

The rail network in the North has many strengths. Investment sponsored by Local Transport Authorities and others has supported a rail renaissance in many areas with annual growth rates outstripping growth in London and the South East. Connectivity to London from the North's larger centres is generally good. Rail provides a significant social role, connecting people to jobs, to healthcare facilities and to education.



Despite these strengths, rail in the North is under-performing compared with networks elsewhere and therefore not realising its full potential. Weaknesses include poor connectivity between some of the North's urban centres and to other major cities in the country with journey times that are not always competitive with the car. Many trains, particularly those operating local services, are amongst the oldest on the national network and do not meet modern expectations or accessibility standards. Crowding is a problem on many routes, and not just in peak periods.

Subsidy requirements are higher in the North than other parts of the country. In part this is a legacy of under investment, for example in electrification and modern rolling stock. Rail in the North can and should deliver greater efficiencies. Committed investment in the Northern Hub and electrification is a welcome reversal of historic under investment, but to deliver greater efficiencies further investment will be needed.

## THE VISION FOR A BETTER RAILWAY IN THE NORTH

**The overall vision is for the railways in the North to be recognised as being a positive feature of living and working in the north, playing a central role in supporting the growth and regeneration of the North's economy.**





## THE STRATEGY

The strategy proposed is to focus on four key themes, the four 'C's:

### CONNECTIVITY

Better connectivity, with targeted improvements to journey times, service frequencies and improved connections to make end-to-end journey times quicker.

### COHERENCE

A more coherent and user-friendly network: A network with the visible coherence of the London Underground delivered over the North's wide geography. This needs defined categories of train services as well planning the North's many routes to operate together as a single whole with a single simplified fares structure.

### CAPACITY

Capacity provision both on-train so that passengers do not experience excessive overcrowding and on-track so additional demand for economically worthwhile passenger and freight movements can be accommodated.

### COST EFFECTIVENESS

Cost effectiveness. As use of the North's rail services grows, costs per passenger and tonne of freight carried need to fall. The key to achieving this is investment.



## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

The Vision suggests that improving services between the key towns and cities in the North will make a significant contribution to economic growth

- For passenger services within the North there are two levels to be addressed:
- Between the five Core Cities in the North (Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield). These cities should be linked by fast high quality services providing high frequency connectivity, the highest standards applicable nationally in terms of customer amenity, and at journey times significantly better than those achievable by road (as measured centre to centre, in off-peak periods).
- Between the major towns and cities of the North (and between them and the five Core Cities). Here the aim is to provide a consistent high standard of express services.



Delivery of the strategy will be achieved by a new approach to building an integrated network through eight key principles:

1. A harmonised and simplified fares system (including smart ticketing)
2. The adoption of a categorised service specification (e.g. high speed, inter-regional express, urban commuter, community railways etc.) each with specific service and rolling stock standards
3. Timetables designed to provide good connections between connecting rail services
4. Information provided in a user-friendly manner throughout the journey, across the network including on connecting modes using the latest, ever-evolving systems and databases
5. Stations designed and operated to facilitate transfers for all users between rail services and onward connections by bus, tram, cycle, car and walking routes
6. Operational practices designed to facilitate through journeys including those involving interchange and including between different operators

7. Investment in infrastructure and rolling stock designed to create a pleasant and safe travelling and waiting environment that is accessible for all, to avoid overcrowding and to facilitate the design of a connectional timetable
8. A progressive introduction of these principles achieved through franchise specifications and input to on-going railway planning processes and through supporting activities of local planning authorities

Some things could be achieved relatively quickly, others will take longer.

In the short term (to 2019) the focus is to maximise the value of committed investment, particularly the Northern Hub and associated electrification schemes, which will bring considerable benefits across the north of England. New franchises in the North will also be important delivery mechanisms.

In the medium term (2019–2024), replacement of rolling stock should be a priority, particularly to capitalise on the vehicle cascade as result of electrification. Opportunities will be pursued for extending the electrified network, for example to key freight locations and ports.

In the long term HS2 will present significant opportunities for the North of England, which will benefit other rail networks by creating the opportunity to change the way the existing network is used. Early investment decisions need to be made to achieve that goal. The North West will be linked to the national high speed rail network when the first phase of HS2 opens in 2026. Yorkshire, the East Midlands and North East will be served by the second phase of HS2 from 2032.

Achieving some components of the strategy may require legislative change, so influencing Government policy development is also important. Network Rail, as the owner and operator of the national rail network is also an important interface. Local Transport Authorities and the Local Transport Plans which they develop play a significant role particularly in facilitating better connections between rail and other modes.



## WHAT DIFFERENCE WOULD THIS STRATEGY MAKE?

A more effective network as set out above could double rail use across the North and carry more freight. This would mean rail could better support economic growth.

It has been projected that the Vision could lead to very considerable benefits. These have been quantified at £50bn (PV 2010 over a 60 year appraisal period) and Gross Value Added benefits (2025, nominal inflation) equate to £0.9bn per year.

The railway will also be more efficient. This will be achieved in part by Network Rail's investment programme, particularly in signalling modernisation and electrification. Efficiencies will also be delivered through better co-ordination of rail and other services, through smart ticketing, through providing longer rather than more trains, through the approach to train procurement and through changes to operating practices.

The North's future network would provide:

- Clear information before the trip
- A single walk-up fare system across the North, integrated with other modes (not removing the opportunity for advance purchase and other discounts)
- Fast and frequent links between the North's Core Cities
- Connected journeys to main centres and London, with certainty
- Trains which meet modern customer expectations
- Convenient journey times, including for leisure and airport trips
- An efficient network for moving freight to market



## ABOUT RAIL NORTH

Rail North is the interim name of the organisation working to devolve responsibility for rail franchising from Whitehall to the North of England.



