

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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MRTF Consultation
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9th March 2021

Dear Recovery Task Force,

Manchester Recovery Task Force Public Consultation

1. Introduction

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in North West England. We are pleased to give our views as follows to this call for evidence.

2. Timing of the Proposals

2.1 We have some concerns that this is not an appropriate time to undertake this exercise when rail travel is so depressed because of Covid 19. Reliability is good, given the service reductions, but patronage is severely depressed. It is impossible to know what future demand and service patterns will be. We believe that in the post Covid world, travel for work will be lower than pre-Covid. It is likely that in the future working from home will be more common, and many employees will divide their time between home and office - to varying proportions during the week/month/year.

2.2 It is probably appropriate though to anticipate some demand for traditional peak services. Even so it could be 3 to 5 years before future work patterns settle down. Even then the situation will be dynamic, as work patterns, and technology evolve. For the purposes of this exercise the *off-peak pattern* is concentrated on.

2.3 It is likely that leisure travel generally and on rail for the purposes of this exercise in the post Covid world will become more prominent relative to work-based journeys. Rail service planning and pricing will need to recognise this in the future.

3. Investment

3.1 The crux of the matter is the need for investment on the Castlefield corridor. We note that the paper refers to developing infrastructure interventions, but none will be available by 2022.

3.2 It is a sore point that the capacity problems on the Corridor have been made worse by the opening of the Ordsall Chord. Under previous plans for the Manchester bottleneck, it was always proposed that improvements at Manchester Piccadilly and Oxford Road would complement the construction of the Ordsall Chord. That has not been the case.

3.3 Infrastructure solutions suggested have been extra platforms at Piccadilly and providing additional infrastructure in the area and on the routes feeding the corridor. In 2014 Network Rail published proposals for the dramatic improvement of Oxford Road Station. However, again, these plans have not proceeded, even in part. They should be reviewed, updated and implemented.

3.4 The consultation refers to the investment at Manchester Victoria. However, this was mainly in the improvement of passenger facilities in the main concourse area (*platform facilities remain woefully inadequate*). There was little or no investment in improving the capacity or operation of what is a cramped inadequate station to meet future demands. The provision of holding sidings to the east of Victoria would assist with reversing trains from the west.

3.5 Freight, only referred to in passing in the document, has long been an issue. A further interim aid would be to reroute freight to/from Trafford Park via a new cord off the WCML in the Warrington area. This should be linked to the beneficial electrification of the former CLC route (Liverpool – Manchester via Warrington).

4. Questions

Question 1 Do you support the aim of standardising and simplifying service patterns if this will significantly improve overall train performance?

4.1 In the absence of any short-term investment plans we do support the aim of standardising and simplifying the service patterns if this will significantly improve overall train performance. This exercise must **not** be used to downgrade or delay much needed future capacity enhancements.

Question 2 Do you support the approach of measuring the service level and performance impacts across all passengers to allow fair trade-offs between options?

4.2 Yes, broadly. There does seem to be though a lack of data to identify the most popular passenger flows or indeed potential flows. This is an area which should be researched before final decisions are taken.

4.3 We feel there is merit in certain circumstances in giving passengers a choice of options of which Manchester stations to serve. A change of train in a relatively short journey can be a major disincentive to using rail, particularly at stations with poor facilities such as Salford Crescent. For example, a choice of South or North Manchester stations from the Southport direction is advantageous.

Question 3 On the basis of these results, which is your preferred option?

4.4 Of the three options we believe that Option C is too interventionist and a step too far. We are suggesting a 4th Option (Option TW) which will preserve 12 paths per hour over the entire corridor (including one off peak freight path).

4.5 The following table summarises our suggestions -

Option TW - summary of possible Corridor services, hourly
() indicates no fixed preference for ultimate destination
1. Glasgow/Edinburgh – Manchester Airport (MIA)
2. South Cumbria – MIA via Wigan
3. Blackpool – MIA
4. Southport – Oxford Road/ Piccadilly via Atherton
5. Liverpool – MIA via CLC
6. (N Wales) Chester – Piccadilly (or beyond) via Chat Moss
7. Liverpool – Nottingham via CLC
8. Liverpool/ Warrington – Oxford Road
9. Liverpool/ Warrington – Oxford Rd (peak)/ freight (off peak)
10. Newcastle – MIA
11. (Scarborough/Redcar) – MIA
12. Leeds/ Bradford – MIA via Calder Valley.

Manchester International Airport

4.6 Manchester Airport is the third most heavily used airport in the UK. The Airport management is very concerned at the implications for travel to / from the airport – for staff, for air passengers and for local residents. Much investment has gone in to increasing capacity at the Airport station. Airline passengers with heavy luggage will balk at changing trains. We have tried to retain an 8 or even 9 trains/hour option serving what we see as the optimum destinations. This option also retains better use of the Ordsall chord.

4.7 A summary of MIA services follows on the next page.

Option TW Summary of Manchester Airport services, hourly	
1.	Glasgow – MIA via Bolton
2.	South Cumbria – MIA via Wigan
3.	Blackpool – MIA via Bolton
4.	Liverpool – MIA via CLC
5.	Doncaster/ Sheffield – MIA via Piccadilly (reverse)
6.	(Scarborough/ Redcar) – MIA via Victoria
7.	Newcastle – MIA via Victoria
8.	Leeds/ Bradford - MIA via Calder Valley
9.	Piccadilly – Crewe via MIA

4.8 If circumstances dictate further rationalisation due to operational reasons, as a North West group we would reluctantly advocate one Trans Pennine Express - MIA service withdrawal rather than any other service.

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

4.9 See below for details on each route. For convenience we have set our proposals against the context of the December 2019 baseline.

4.10 Liverpool to Manchester via Warrington Central

Dec 2019 -

- *1 fast train per hour between Liverpool and Manchester Airport, via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.*

Propose continuation of this service fast/ semi-fast. It is vital that Liverpool has a through Manchester Airport service.

- *1 fast train per hour from Liverpool to Nottingham (and Norwich) via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.*

Propose no change, though we understand the service will no longer run beyond Nottingham.

- *2 trains per hour between Liverpool and Manchester Oxford Road, skip stopping with some stations only having one train every 2 hours.*

Propose this becomes hourly Liverpool/ Warrington Central – Oxford Rd. An extra service could run in the peak in place of the freight path which we suggest should be off peak only.

4.11 Liverpool and Wigan to Manchester via Eccles.

Dec 2019 –

- *2 fast trains per hour from Liverpool to Manchester Victoria, on to Leeds via Huddersfield.*

Trans Pennine Express service, propose no change.

- *1 train per hour from Chester to Leeds, via Manchester Victoria and Halifax.*

Propose 1 or 2 (as in Option C) trains/hr to Calder Valley and Leeds. One to call at Eccles and Patricroft off peak.

- *1 train per hour from North Wales to Manchester Airport, via Warrington Bank Quay, Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.*

We are not impressed with the proposed diversion via Northwich (in option C). There is a substantial flow from Helsby, Frodsham and Runcorn East to South Manchester. We propose this link be maintained with the option of going beyond Piccadilly, probably not the Airport.

- *1 stopping train per hour from Liverpool to Crewe, via Newton-le-Willows, Manchester Oxford Road, Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport.*

Discontinued in our option TW but one Liverpool service to MIA via CLC route retained.

- *1 fast train per hour from Cumbria to Manchester Airport, via Wigan North Western, Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly*

Propose retain via Wigan (and possibly also Bolton, although there are concerns about pathing and congestion issues on the Bolton route).

- *In the peak periods, 1 stopping train per hour from Liverpool to Manchester Victoria.*

We have no issues here – this service is retained in Options A, B & C.

4.12 Wigan to Manchester via Atherton and Westhoughton.

Dec 2019 –

- *1 train per hour from Southport to Stalybridge via Westhoughton and Manchester Victoria.*

Options A, B & C keep the link to Stalybridge.

- *1 train per hour from Southport to Alderley Edge via Westhoughton, Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.*

Option C has a peak service from Wigan (Southport?) to Manchester Oxford Road, via Atherton, running semi-fast. We would affirm that there is an all-day need to retain a service between Southport and South Manchester on the Atherton line with some intermediate calls. The Oxford Road/Piccadilly area and the opportunity for onward connections is an attraction for many passengers on this line.

- *1 train per hour from Wigan to Leeds via Atherton, Manchester Victoria and Dewsbury.*

- *1 train per hour from Wigan to Blackburn via Atherton and Manchester Victoria.*
- *1 train per hour from Kirkby to Manchester Victoria via Atherton.*
- *In the peak periods, 1 train per hour from Wigan to Manchester Victoria via Atherton.*

If the Southport – South Manchester service is retained the above 4 trains an hour off peak frequency should not have a detrimental effect at Victoria. We have no particular preference for how services link through Victoria.

We note the potential of the Atherton line as a potential first-class alternative to the Bolton route with substantial potential.

4.13 Preston to Manchester via Chorley

Dec 2019 –

- *1 fast train per hour from Scotland to Manchester Airport (with limited calls at Bolton) via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.*

We propose no change. On balance we have concerns over Chorley stops (Options B&C) because of heavy commuter overloading potential.

- *1 semi-fast train per hour from Blackpool to Manchester Airport via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly*

Definite need for through service to Airport all day.

- *1 stopping train per hour from Blackpool to Hazel Grove via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.*

We suggest rerouting to Victoria and Stalybridge (which will be electrified). In the longer term perhaps to Rochdale.

- *1 stopping train per hour from Preston to Manchester Victoria.*

No change. Should run all day if possible, not just in peaks as in Option C.

Blackburn to Manchester via Darwen

4.14 We have a concern that additional stops at Moses Gate, Farnworth and Kearsley should not be in the Clitheroe service because of journey time considerations. We have sympathy with curtailing this service at Rochdale because of the performance threats posed by the single line sections between Blackburn and Bolton.

4.15 Leeds to Manchester via Rochdale

Dec 2019 –

- *1 train per hour from Leeds to Manchester Victoria via Bradford.*
- *1 train per hour from Leeds to Chester via 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 Wigan via Todmorden, Manchester Victoria and Atherton.*
- *2 trains per hour from Rochdale to Blackburn / Clitheroe via Manchester Victoria and Bolton.*

The principal of 6 trains east of Victoria is upheld held in all 3 options. We strongly advocate one through Calder Valley (Leeds/Bradford) to Manchester Airport service to fulfil demand from the centres of population en route, not only to MIA but also south Manchester and onward connections. This line is probably the busiest corridor without an Airport link. A Bradford - MIA service was a commitment of the Northern franchise in 2016.

4.16 The opportunity should be taken to address the historically poor stopping frequencies at Littleborough, Smithy Bridge and Castleton. We understand that there are new housing developments in the catchments of these stations.

4.17 Stalybridge to Manchester Victoria (local trains)

Dec 2019 -

- *1 train per hour from Stalybridge to Manchester Victoria.*
- *1 train per hour from Stalybridge to Southport via Manchester Victoria and Westhoughton.*

We have no particular preferences. A suggestion has been made for the half hourly Blackburn trains to run to Stalybridge.

4.18 Huddersfield to Manchester via TPE

Dec 2019 –

- *2 fast trains per hour to Liverpool, from Edinburgh and Scarborough, via Manchester Victoria.*
- *2 fast trains per hour to Manchester Airport, coming from Newcastle and Redcar Central, via Manchester Victoria, Manchester Oxford Road, and Manchester Piccadilly.*
- *1 train per hour from Hull to Manchester Piccadilly, making local stops between Huddersfield and Stalybridge in peak periods.*
- *1 stopping train per hour from Huddersfield to Manchester Piccadilly.*

We would basically preserve this pattern except that if circumstances dictate further rationalisation due to operational reasons, as a North West group we would reluctantly advocate one TPE - MIA service withdrawal rather than any other MIA service.

4.19 Sheffield to Manchester via Hope Valley

Dec 2019 -

- *1 stopping train per hour between Manchester Piccadilly and Sheffield skip stopping during the off-peak*

We are not keen on skip stopping which precludes intermediate journeys.

- *1 fast train per hour between Cleethorpes and Manchester Airport via Manchester Piccadilly.*

We suggest this service is at least retained from Sheffield or Doncaster, notwithstanding operational issues at Piccadilly. We believe there is a considerable market for Manchester Airport from South Yorkshire.

- *1 fast train per hour between Liverpool and Nottingham (and Norwich) via Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly.*

This should be retained (to Nottingham).

4.20 South Manchester Local Services

Dec 2019 -

- *1 train per hour from Liverpool to Crewe via Manchester Piccadilly and Airport.*

Curtail to Manchester Piccadilly to Crewe via MIA.

- *1 train per hour from Piccadilly to Crewe via Stockport.*

This service should be retained. a through service from Stockport to Crewe is required for commuting, shopping and leisure use. This will also enable Cheadle Hulme and Handforth to keep a through service to Crewe.

- *1 train per hour from Blackpool to Hazel Grove.*

As per previous comments should run to Victoria (and possibly onwards).

- *1 train per hour from Southport to Alderley Edge.*

Preservation of a necessary South Manchester service from Southport to Oxford Road/ Piccadilly is required.

- *1 train per hour from Piccadilly to Stoke.*

Standard pattern to be retained.

- *2 trains per hour from Piccadilly to Buxton.*

Need to keep the half hourly service.

- *1 train per hour from Piccadilly to Chester.*

Standard service to be retained.

- *In peak periods, additional services from Stoke and Alderley Edge to Piccadilly, and from Chester to Stockport.*

To continue (as in options A & B).

4.21 Routes from the East to Manchester

We support Rose Hill Marple trains calling all stops every 30 mins (Option C).

4.22 Manchester Airport

Dec 2019 –

- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Glasgow / Edinburgh.*
Retain (via Bolton)
- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Barrow / Windermere.*
Retain (via Wigan)
- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Blackpool.*
Retain (via Bolton)
- *1 train per hour from Crewe to Liverpool via Newton-le-Willows.*
Curtail to Crewe to Manchester Piccadilly via MIA.
- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Liverpool via Warrington Central.*
Retain.
- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Redcar Central via Leeds.*
- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Newcastle via Leeds.*
If circumstances dictate further rationalisation due to operational reasons, as a North West group we would reluctantly advocate one Trans Pennine Express - MIA service withdrawal rather than any other. Consider Scarborough.
- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to Cleethorpes.*
To retain from Doncaster/Sheffield at least.
- *1 train per hour from Manchester Airport to North Wales*
Discontinue – Bradford/ Calder Valley a more worthwhile alternative.

Questions 5/6/7 Where do you usually travel from and to? How often do you make this journey? What is the reason for your journey?

4.23 As an organisation representing public transport users all over the North West, we do not deem it appropriate to complete these sections.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully,

John A Moorhouse

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary