

Ms Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire
Rt Hon Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
Mr Oliver Coppard, Mayor of South Yorkshire
Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Leader of Bradford MDC
Mr Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region
Lord Ben Houchen, Tees Valley Mayor
Ms Kim McGuinness, North-East Mayor
Mr David Skaith, Mayor of York and North Yorkshire

High Speed UK

Connecting the Nation

www.highspeeduk.co.uk

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Dear Northern Leaders,

We refer to recent letters (dated 20/05/24 and 18/06/24, emailed from colin.elliff@highspeeduk.co.uk) to yourselves, concerning Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan (published March 2024) and the consequences that its massively suboptimal and inappropriate design will carry for the communities that you represent. The letters also describe the hugely superior connectivity and capacity that our alternative Network North scheme will deliver for every major Northern Powerhouse community (see Appendix B on following page). We attach repeat copies for your review.

We would presume that you have passed our letters on to your transport advisors, and we are disappointed to note that nearly 3 months on, we have received no substantive reply to either letter. Given the gravity of the concerns raised, we are mystified why your advisors should have chosen to ignore our letters; however we are sure that as a Northern Metro Mayor you will appreciate how important it is, that the Northern Powerhouse is served not by any railway system, but by the best possible railway system. This must deliver the greatest possible improvements in connectivity and capacity to the greatest number of people, right across the region. Only with such a system in place can the ambition, common among all Northern leaders, be realised for a Levelled-up, Net Zero Northern Powerhouse.

As our letters relate, it is plain that the official Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals embody such profound connectivity deficiencies that they cannot possibly deliver the promised transformation in connectivity and capacity – which is of course exemplified in our own Network North scheme.

We would therefore be grateful for the opportunity to meet you – either individually, but preferably in a broader meeting of Metro Mayors – to explain the issues at stake, and the huge advantages that Network North will bring for the entire region, and for the communities that you represent.

We are particularly keen to emphasise the crucial importance of integration, whereby all transport initiatives are coordinated to ensure that the overall transport system – comprising new high speed rail, upgraded existing network, tram networks, buses and aviation – combines to form an optimised network, delivering the greatest possible improvement in connectivity and capacity.

Currently, there is little sign of that integration and optimisation actually happening, and – aside from our fundamental concern at the hugely suboptimal performance of Northern Powerhouse Rail – we have specific concerns with a) Network Rail's Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU), b) the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Board's scheme for a new line connecting the two cities, and c) the West Yorkshire Mass Transit System (WYMTS) currently under development by West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Our concerns are briefly tabulated in Appendix A on the following page, and in the coming weeks we will be writing to you to provide further detail.

We would be grateful for your personal confirmation that you are in receipt of this letter, and we will shortly contact you with a view to arranging a meeting.

Yours sincerely

Colin Elliff BSc CEng MICE, Civil Engineering Principal, High Speed UK

APPENDIX A

Scheme	HSUK/Network North concern
Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU)	Ongoing TRU works for the new 'Baker Viaduct' at Ravensthorpe will block restoration of the Spen Valley line as the primary southern intercity rail access to Bradford, and will prevent establishment of a 'Dewsbury Interchange' station to enable passenger interchange between Transpennine and Spen Valley routes. (Please refer to the sketch below; the Transpennine route is shown grey and the Spen Valley route is shown brown.)
Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU)	Forthcoming TRU proposals for electrification and depot works between Leeds and Cross Gates/Thorpe Park will effectively block future 4-tracking of that route, necessary for both Northern Powerhouse Rail and Network North as a primary intercity corridor linking West Yorkshire to Humberside, the North-East and (as HSUK) to Scotland. 4-tracking is vital to provide transformed capacity along this route, necessary for both improved intercity/interregional services and a doubling of capacity for local services through Leeds City Station.
West Yorkshire Mass Transit System (WYMTS)	Development of interurban WYMTS light rail routes must be coordinated with existing (heavy) rail network to ensure optimum overall connectivity and access to locations not currently served by the existing rail network.
Liverpool & Manchester Railway Board (LMRB)	The proposed scheme for a new railway linking Manchester and Liverpool is overly dependent upon the established, but now cancelled HS2 Phase 2b proposals. As a result the LMRB scheme exhibits huge dysfunctionalities in its proposed station solutions for Manchester Airport and Manchester, and it badly fails to meet Transport for the North's specification for intercity journey times (20 minutes between Liverpool and Manchester).

APPENDIX B

