

Mr Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of Liverpool City Region

Rt Hon Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

cc Cllr Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council  
Cllr Liam Robinson, Leader of Liverpool City Council  
Cllr Hans Mundry, Leader of Warrington Council  
Mr Chris Woodrooffe, Managing Director, Manchester Airport  
Mr Claudio Veritiero, CEO, Port of Liverpool  
Cllr Tom Ross, Leader of Trafford Council  
Cllr Nick Mannion, Leader of Cheshire East Council  
Cllr Louise Gittins, Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council

cc Ms Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire  
Mr Oliver Coppard, Mayor of South Yorkshire  
Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe, Leader of Bradford MDC  
Lord Ben Houchen, Tees Valley Mayor  
Ms Kim McGuinness, North-East Mayor  
Mr David Skaith, Mayor of York and North Yorkshire

Dear Mayors Rotheram and Burnham,

We write further to our recent letters (dated 20/05/24, 18/06/24 and 05/09/24) 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. These letters – now posted in the HSUK website library <http://highspeeduk.co.uk/newletters.html> as Documents L11, L12 and L14 – also describe the hugely superior connectivity and capacity that our alternative Network North scheme will deliver for every major Northern Powerhouse community. We would note that to date, we have not had the courtesy of a substantive response to the concerns that we have raised in any of our letters, and, given the clear urgency, we would request that you personally attend to this matter.

The purpose of this letter is to raise a separate but related issue, that of the Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board (LMRB) which you lead, and its developing initiative for a new railway linking Liverpool and Manchester, running via Warrington and Manchester Airport.

Please be assured that we are fully supportive of any initiative that will achieve optimal rail connectivity for Liverpool, Warrington, Manchester Airport and Manchester, as part of a wider coordinated strategy for railway development across the Northern Powerhouse.

However, we believe that the current LMRB scheme – as described in the September 2024 report *Building a Route to Prosperity* – for a single line of route linking Liverpool, Warrington (Bank Quay), Manchester Airport (i.e. the remote station originally proposed by HS2 Ltd) and Manchester, broadly in accordance with earlier TfN Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals – will not achieve its proponents' stated aims of 'world class connectivity' and 'the most ambitious line possible' either for the cities in question, or for the wider Northern Powerhouse. Moreover, despite the report's stated ambition to 'learn the lessons of HS2' (P4, Para 5), the present LMRB proposals are plainly based upon the failed (and now abandoned) HS2 Phase 2b scheme; as such they replicate all of HS2's massive connectivity deficiencies.

Our criticisms are informed by the comprehensively superior performance of our own Network North scheme. Network North (see Appendix A, not to be confused with the initiative of the same name launched by the previous Government in October 2023) has been developed completely independent of HS2, to diametrically opposite principles of full integration and optimised network performance. As a direct consequence it vastly outperforms Northern Powerhouse Rail across the entire north of England.

On this basis, we can confidently predict that Network North’s superior overall network performance will deliver superior connectivity for all the major communities – Liverpool, Warrington, Manchester Airport and Manchester – along the proposed route of the new LMRB main line. And owing to Network North’s full integration with the existing network, we can also demonstrate the connectivity benefits that will spread to all ‘small town’ communities in the Liverpool-Manchester Growth Zone and across the wider North-West.

To support our assertions, we have provided (in Appendix B) a brief comparative assessment of the emerging LMRB proposals against our own Network North scheme. For further information backing our broader claims for superior network performance, we would refer you to Documents I03, J03 & K03, also available on <http://highspeeduk.co.uk/newletters.html>.

We are sure you would agree that any railway scheme in the Northern Powerhouse should only go ahead if it can be shown to deliver the greatest possible improvement in network connectivity and capacity, and thereby bring about the greatest possible Levelling-up of the Northern economy, and the greatest possible reduction in transport CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. We are also sure you would agree that second-best is not an option.

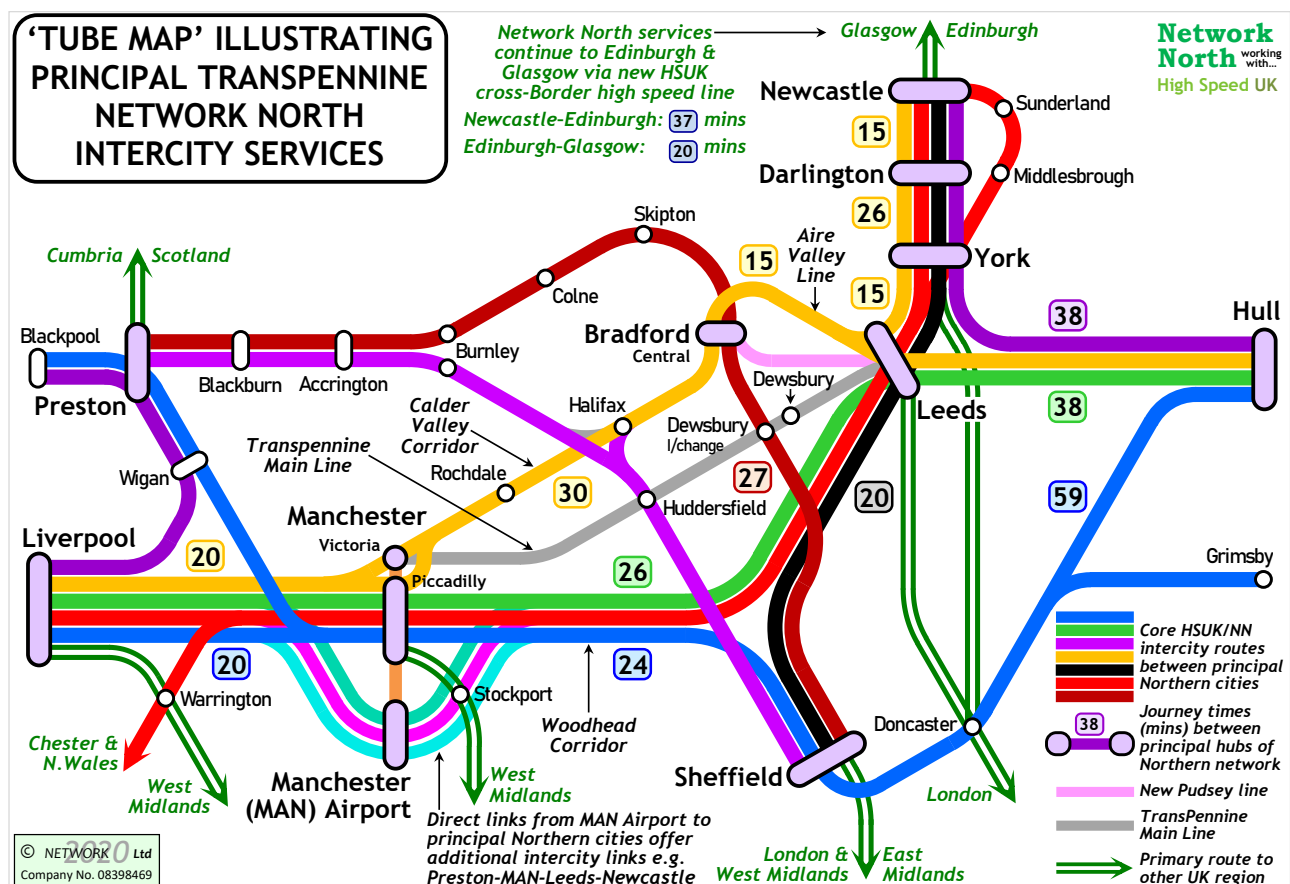
We believe strongly that Network North is the best, and indeed the only railway scheme capable of delivering the transformation in rail network capacity and connectivity necessary for Levelling-up and for Net Zero in the Northern Powerhouse. We would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with yourselves, and with the other members of the Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board, to present our proposals.

We look forward to your early response.

Yours sincerely

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

## APPENDIX A



## APPENDIX B

Commentary comparing proposals by Liverpool-Manchester Railway Board (LMRB) and by HSUK/Network North for a new railway line linking Liverpool and Manchester.

	<b>LMRB/NPR proposals</b>	<b>Network North proposals</b>
<b>Liverpool-Manchester journey time</b>	The circuitous LMRB route, via central Warrington and Manchester Airport, is based upon the HS2 'Manchester Spur' first proposed in 2012. Its journey time of 30-35 minutes (dependent upon stopping pattern) is no faster than that currently offered by the 1830 direct Chat Moss line – massively failing TfN's own specification for a 20 minute journey time between Liverpool and Manchester.	The more direct Network North Liverpool-Manchester route, variously following the corridors of the M62 and the original (1830) 'Chat Moss' Liverpool-Manchester railway, offers a journey time of 20 minutes, with no intermediate stops. Unlike the LMRB scheme, this meets TfN's 20 minute journey time specification.
<b>Station in central Liverpool</b>	<b><i>Although early press reports indicated that Liverpool Central might be selected as the terminus for LMRB services, it is noted that the September 2024 report 'Building a Route to Prosperity' indicates clearly that Lime Street station has been correctly identified as the LMRB Liverpool terminus. However, it is important to understand the issues that might appear to favour Liverpool Central.</i></b>	
	It is believed that Liverpool Central was originally favoured as the terminus for LMRB services, owing to concerns at proposed works at Lime Street requiring a blockade (i.e. full closure) of the station for between 18 months and 3 years. Restoration of the former CLC surface level terminus at Liverpool Central would be highly undesirable – the site is extremely poky, with a) space only for 4No platforms around 240 metres long, b) substantial retail development needing to be cleared and c) critical passenger congestion in the underground Merseyrail station. It is thus vital that railway congestion issues dictating blockades at Lime Street are resolved.	The Network North scheme to transform Lime Street station into Liverpool's 'Gateway to the UK' delivers the required number and length of platforms for terminating intercity services at Lime Street (6No 300m long). With local services diverted to Merseyrail via new connecting tunnels from the restored 'Waterloo' Tunnel, sufficient traffic can be diverted away from Lime Street to allow phased reconstruction of platforms and station 'throat' within the existing terminus with no need for blockades. The Network North scheme would also include works to decongest Central station, unimpeded by any restoration of the surface level terminus.
<b>Liverpool-Warrington route &amp; potential clash with freight traffic</b>	The Liverpool-Warrington section appears to follow the mothballed Fiddlers Ferry line – an essential element of any dedicated freight route to the Port of Liverpool via the Garston-Timperley line (which comprises the only practicable dedicated freight route to the Port of Liverpool).	The Network North Liverpool-Manchester-Leeds/Sheffield high speed passenger route runs completely clear of all sections of Network North's dedicated Transpennine freight route to the Port of Liverpool, including the mothballed Garston-Timperley line via Fiddlers Ferry.

<b>Issues at Warrington Bank Quay</b>	The difficult station location at Warrington Bank Quay Low Level poses huge challenges to develop as an effective interchange with West Coast Main Line services at Warrington Bank Quay High Level – and again blocks the restoration of the Garston-Timperley as a dedicated freight route to Liverpool Docks.	Network North concentrates all of Warrington’s intercity services at the existing Bank Quay High Level station, with east- and west-facing links from the WCML to the Network North main line, passing to the north of Warrington. This leaves the Garston-Timperley line through Low Level free to handle freight traffic along Network North’s dedicated Transpennine railfreight route.
<b>Station at Manchester Airport</b>	The proposed station at Manchester Airport is located around 1 mile from the airport, on the opposite side of the M56. Airline passengers plus luggage will be forced to make a tram transfer along an as-yet-unbuilt section of Manchester Metrolink to reach the airport terminals.	Network North trains will operate from the existing Manchester Airport station, transformed from a terminus into a ‘through’ station. This will enable direct trains to all principal Northern Powerhouse communities, far outmatching the LMRB/NPR service offer.
<b>Station in central Manchester</b>	Any through underground station at Manchester Piccadilly, constructed on a broadly south-to-north alignment, and meeting stated aspirations for future-proofing for possible HS2-style high speed links from London, seems certain to cause huge destruction and disruption in its construction. The station structure is likely to comprise an Old Oak Common-style box, of sufficient width to accommodate perhaps 6 platforms, and possibly approaching 1 km in length if it is future-proofed to accommodate 400m long HS2 trains from London!!	The Network North underground station at Manchester Piccadilly will be constructed on an east-west axis below Fairfield Street, just south of the existing trainshed and below Platforms 13/14. Top-down construction will be employed to create 2 decks each comprising 3No platforms circa 300m long, with eastbound located above westbound. This is all achievable at a fraction of the disruption entailed in the LMRB/NPR scheme. Note that the Network North scheme also allows for a second, more central station (Manchester Central, located close to the abandoned terminus aka GMEX) for local services.
<b><i>Note that both LMRB and Network North schemes rely on a pile-free corridor for tunnelled routes under central Manchester!!</i></b>		