

Date: 15 July 2021

Sent by e-mail to:

[REDACTED]

Tim Wood
4 Piccadilly Place
2nd Floor
Manchester
M1 3BN

Tel: 0161 250 2711

Dear Minister,

Rail Services and Infrastructure in Manchester

I am writing to you on behalf of Members of the Rail North Committee who met yesterday (Wednesday 14 July 2021) to consider the Manchester Recovery Task Force's recommendation of Option B+ for the December 2022 timetable for services in and out of the Manchester rail network.

There is unanimity among members that this is a key example of an urgent requirement for infrastructure holding back the railway in the North. Members recognise the rail industry needs to have a planning assumption in order to deliver its' timetable commitments for December 2022 and neither they, nor we, wish to impede this process and are clear that this should remain in place.

However, Members are clear, and have resolved, that any endorsement of Option B+ will be dependent on satisfactory and helpful responses to the following conditions.

Namely that:

- The Integrated Rail Plan is published this month (July 2021), detailing what rail projects in the North will be funded and when they will be delivered;
- That an accelerated timetable is agreed for a package of initial rail infrastructure schemes in Manchester, to start earlier than currently planned;
- That it can be ensured that the infrastructure schemes in Manchester enable long-held commitments for new connections, including services from Bradford and the Calder Valley to Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport;
- That there is a firm commitment to reinstate the direct rail link between South Yorkshire and Manchester Airport if removed in December 2022, and timescales of when the service will be reinstated; and
- That there is a satisfactory resolution of the detailed Cheshire and cross-Warrington service pattern (and Manchester services) during the next phase of timetable development.

Mindful of the planning process and its lead-in requirements, Members have called for an early response to the above and would be ready to meet to

consider and respond to this within the month (July 2021) so matters can proceed at pace subject to satisfactory outcomes.

At the meeting Members expressed disappointment that the Quarterly Round Table meeting scheduled for Wednesday, which would have allowed direct ministerial discussion on this matter, was cancelled at late notice and look forward to hearing from you on the rescheduling of an early date for this urgent meeting, on or before 23 July 2021, which may also help secure progress as we work together to secure a better outcome for passengers across the North.

The fundamental issue here, is that the North is being asked to cut back its rail services at the exact moment the Country is being asked to support economic recovery without any clear picture of when the required infrastructure to do this will be in place. We need a clear plan that allows services and connections lost as part of reducing the number of trains on the Manchester Corridor to be reinstated as soon as possible.

The strength of feeling among Members on this issue is clear. It is my sincere hope that, together, in the spirit of collaboration, we can deliver the resources, focus and commitment to jointly and swiftly address this requirement for levelling up in line with the Government's stated intentions for the UK.

Yours sincerely,



Tim Wood
Interim Chief Executive