

**Rail Capacity
Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce Response**

to the

**High Speed Rail
All Party Parliamentary Group**

The following consultation response is sent on behalf of the Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce to the High Speed Rail All Party Parliamentary Group. Please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss any of these points in further detail.

Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

High Speed Rail - Consultation Response

1. The Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce has consistently supported the case for High Speed Rail (HS2), and therefore welcomes the Government's commitment to this important infrastructure project. We also welcome the fact that HS2 will be built in a 'Y' configuration (we lobbied hard and long for the Eastern routing to Sheffield and Leeds), delivering enhanced rail connectivity to our part of the country. It is essential that this promised infrastructure is delivered without delay, in order to cater for projected capacity shortfalls, and to bring the attendant benefits of high-speed connectivity between our regional centres and the capital.
2. A major part of the justification for HSR is to address those projected capacity shortfalls on the existing network, which by 2032 when HSR reaches Leeds could without intervention become a very significant problem. It is therefore imperative that our previous calls for 'Enhancements and upgrading of the track on the East Coast Mainline' should remain a major priority in order that an acceptable North-South service can be maintained over that next 20 year period. But additionally, our Chamber continues to call **for improvements to regional rail services, particularly Trans-Pennine.**
3. Since Leeds is a destination for HSR it is absolutely vital that these regional feeder services are fully modernised and fit for connectivity and optimum access to HSR in order to maximise the benefit to our region of HSR from 2032. Without such major improvements to services and connectivity the full economic benefit of HSR may not be realised in our region, and in view of the very high cost of HSR (£30bn) it would be totally unacceptable if those full benefits were not achieved.
4. Pressing and immediate concerns around current transport infrastructure remain. Mid Yorkshire Chamber's support for HS2 was qualified by repeated calls for improvements to be made to the existing East Coast Mainline (see above), which is suffering progressively-increasing capacity shortfalls. The Chamber is pleased that its lobbying for improvements to the Trans-Pennine route connecting Leeds to Manchester via Huddersfield has helped secure the confirmation in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement of the electrification of the route, and it is a start which will go some way to improving regional connectivity in our region. **There are clear, persistent, rail transport issues at both a local and regional level that must be addressed in addition to continued work on HS2:**

4.1. Northern Hub

The proposed Northern Hub will facilitate a significant increase in the number of trains across the north of England. This improvement will provide both quicker and more frequent connections between the region's cities including Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield. Regional connectivity is equally as important as improved links to the Capital, and Government should prioritise this infrastructure project.

4.2. Caldervale Line

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We continue to campaign for upgrades to the Caldervale line, particularly now that the go-ahead has been given for the link between Piccadilly and Victoria Stations in Manchester (the Ordsall Chord). The electrification of this line is a first priority, so that there will be the prospect of an electrified service direct from Liverpool to Bradford, and if the Bradford Crossrail Project were to go ahead, direct to Leeds. As an interim measure until the line is electrified, there is an urgent need for significant upgrades to the quantity and quality of the rolling stock on this line. The introduction of the 'Todmorden' Curve, will free-up some rail traffic movement at Hebden Bridge Station, and thus slightly augment capacity from Halifax through to Manchester. More efficient electronic signalling on the line would have a more significant impact on the provision of additional capacity.

4.3. **East Coast Mainline**

Network Rail's Initial Investment Plan 2011 identified existing commitments, under the Intercity Express Programme, to replace the rolling stock on the East Coast Main Line. These improvements will help to address projected capacity shortfalls until the advent of HS2, and lessen journey times on key south/north routes along the East Coast. As mentioned above growing capacity remains a persistent issue that must be tackled in the short and medium term.

4.4. **Government Commitment is essential**

The Mid Yorkshire Chamber calls on the Government for continued commitment to rail transport infrastructure both at a local and regional level in order to deliver improved service, enhanced capacity and increased frequency. These projects will bring real confidence to businesses in our region and could facilitate greater inward investment, reduce distances to new markets and enhance our region's competitive advantage. HS2 will provide the long-term answer to providing the necessary capacity, but we cannot accept that ongoing developments and upgrades of the existing network will be adversely affected in the twenty-or-so years between now and HS2 becoming a reality.