

3 October 2019

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Dear Minister,

Thank you for your recent letter and the verbal update provided at our September Transport for the North Board meeting regarding the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU). Your passion and commitment to the North is appreciated and this was clearly demonstrated at our Board meeting.

Transport for the North remains fully supportive of TRU and the recommendations set out in our statutory advice issued to the Secretary of State in September 2018. Indeed, TRU is a key part of our 'Northern Budget' asks for a Northern Infrastructure Pipeline. TRU acts as a precursor to Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and has the potential to secure major economic, passenger and environmental benefits. It is therefore vital that any phased investment programme can deliver in full all the strategic outputs agreed in the Client Development Remit of 2016 - including the gauge clearance necessary for the movement of modern container traffic by rail across the Pennines.

At present the Department for Transport (DfT) acts as sole client for the TRU scheme and therefore, unlike NPR, our involvement and resources are substantially less - despite a significant operational relationship existing between the two programmes. Further consideration must ultimately be given as to how these programmes dovetail to deliver the transformation the North's rail network it so desperately deserves.

Transport for the North's statutory advice on NPR called for an enhanced role on TRU and we are therefore encouraged by your announcement at the September Transport for the North Board meeting that you favour greater collaboration and partnership working with us to help determine the best outcome for the North. We would welcome further details as to how a more influential role for Transport for the North, supplemented by adequate resources, could be taken forward to help foster a more open and productive relationship between TfN, Network Rail and your Department.

As you will have witnessed at the Transport for the North Board meeting in Manchester, our Board members are united in their desire for the sustainable development of the UK's Northern ports and the freight and logistics industry. Supporting the transfer of short sea and deep-sea container traffic across the Pennines by rail to meet existing and projected demand is a regional and national economic and environmental imperative. To this end, we would reiterate our statutory advice issued over 12 months ago which recommended Network Rail be remitted to undertake detailed design for a Transport for the North preferred option which included W10/12 gauge clearance along the 'Diggle corridor' to understand the likely infrastructure requirements, delivery programme, whole life

costs and benefits of this much-needed enhanced rail freight provision, prior to any formal announcement on the first phase of investment.

Our Board members are equally united in their desire to ensure this comprehensive route upgrade includes the delivery of fully accessible and upgraded facilities at all stations along the TRU corridor. Given the significant disruption for a number of years to passengers and communities during construction, the project should, in the very least, ensure that safe and modern waiting environments are provided at all TRU stations and that persons with reduced mobility are able to better access and enjoy their travelling experience by rail.

Our Board members would also welcome further clarification on several points relating to the current DfT preferred option we initially raised back in December 2018 which are not fully captured in your letter. Whilst you refer to the current TRU programme as being 'likely to form the first phase of a longer-term programme of development' greater assurance about your Department's desire to deliver in full all the project's strategic outputs (including a gauge cleared freight path) is requested. We would also appreciate confirmation that you would want Phase 1 designed as an initial phase, planned in order to minimise overall disruption from all subsequent phases of the whole scheme. In particular the delivery plan must seek to make maximum use of individual possessions. Repeated possessions carrying out poorly sequenced work, or work scoped without taking into account future investment, runs the risk of adding significant disruption – something that passengers will want us to avoid.

Our Board members would also welcome greater assurance that should the project not spend its allocated contingency that this funding will be retained in the North to deliver further TRU enhancements and should not be at risk of being spent elsewhere as your letter suggests. The opportunity to review the benefits of the proposed CP6 investment and understand how the scheme is being future-proofed to support further TRU investment would also be welcomed. Within your update to the Transport for the North Board you promised the opportunity for oversight and scrutiny of the 31 interventions planned across the corridor. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how this could best be accommodated. We look forward to continued dialogue over these matters and are keen to work with your Department to explore opportunities for delivering a phased programme of investment that supports the ambition of Transport for the North.

Yours sincerely,

Barry White



**Chief Executive
Transport for the North**