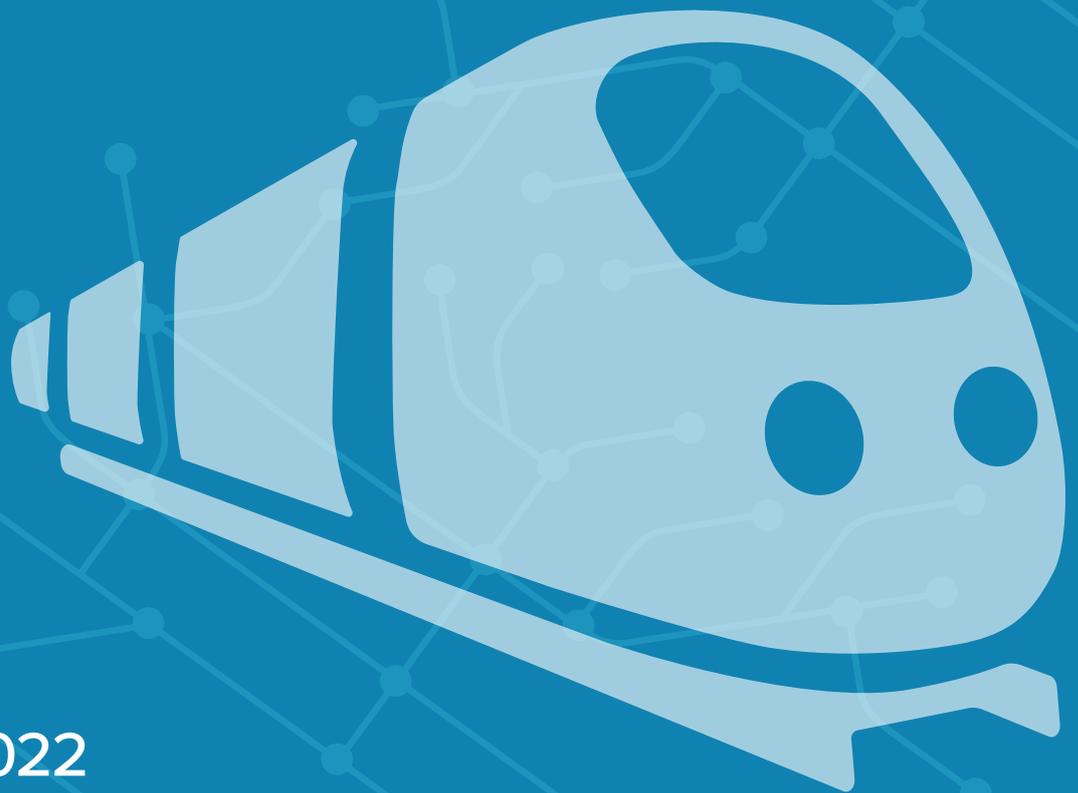


A BETTER CONNECTED LOCAL ECONOMY

THE CASE FOR THE CITY
VALLEY RAIL LINK



AUTUMN 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are making the case for restoring a commuter and visitor rail link between Rawtenstall in Lancashire and Manchester city centre. This document outlines the rationale for the rail link and summarises the technical analysis to make this possible. It outlines the indicative economic impact on business growth and job opportunities, and boost to the Lancashire visitor economy.

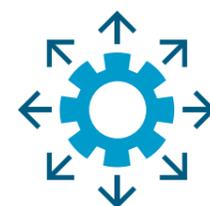
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022 the local authorities where the link would make such a positive impact have been exploring the rationale for a new City Valley Link which will operate a rail link running from Rawtenstall, via Ramsbottom, Bury and Heywood and onwards into Manchester Victoria. [Here we outline the case.](#)

Along the route of the line, we have done much locally to grow the economy. This includes the growth and redevelopment of Rawtenstall and Bury. In rail infrastructure terms we are seeking a moderate level of infrastructure support to make a step change in boosting the sub-regional economy.



THIS WOULD HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT IN SPEEDING UP JOURNEY TIMES INTO MANCHESTER



3,100 NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES



VISITOR ECONOMY WITHIN EASY REACH



ACCESS TO WORLD OUTDOOR LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES

The purpose of this is to provide a summary of this investment proposal. It provides a brief overview of the concept, an assessment of its viability, a technical summary of the key infrastructure issues and a summary of the detailed business case which is being submitted to HM Government for funding by the Department for Transport.

East Lancashire has a thriving economy ripe for further expansion as the local economy changes in the twenty-first century.

Rossendale and the wider East Lancashire is a vital commuter base for Manchester, with expanding numbers of residents overloading the M66 as a car and bus route into the city centre

Demand for a new rail link is significant.

Working with world renowned rail experts – Systra – we estimate that there could be as

many as 1.2m trips annually on a new rail link between Rawtenstall and Manchester.

Taking in Ramsbottom, Bury, Heywood and drawing on the wider populations in Rossendale, Bury and Rochdale this would have a major impact in speeding up journey times into Manchester and removing around half a million car journeys per year.

We estimate we can grow the local economy by at least 5,000 new jobs over the next 25 years by improving the rail infrastructure, opening up new opportunities for businesses in Bury town centre and the Rossendale Valley Growth Corridor.

We propose to build on an existing rail infrastructure, substantially lessening the capital cost and necessity of building a new line.

The visitor economy in East Lancashire is currently underdeveloped and improvements in connectivity particularly at weekends will bring the visitor economy within easy reach of 2.8 million people living in Greater Manchester, benefiting the nationally recognised Whitaker Museum, unique East Lancashire heritage railway and enabling people to access world-class outdoor leisure opportunities.

We are backing this project as a major boost to businesses, commuters and helping to bring this part of Lancashire up to the levels of other faster growing parts of the UK economy.

THE PROPOSAL

Our preferred option is for a rail service spread across two phases of work. In phase 1 we will use the existing heritage line between Rawtenstall and create a new rail platform at Bury Market Street station. In phase 2 we will use the existing heritage line between Bury (Market Street) via Heywood into Manchester Victoria. Over the last 12 months we have explored a number of potential solutions and we are confident this option provides the best economic case for a new rail link, as well as the option which will most benefit residents.

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSAL ARE:

- an end-to-end journey time of around 44 minutes from Rawtenstall to Manchester city centre, significantly outperforming the current peak time bus/car journey of up to 90 mins
- two trains per hour at peak times to benefit commuters and one train per hour in the off-peak all along the route
- greater levels of current service at weekends to improve access for day visitors to East Lancashire
- convenient pedestrian interchange with Metrolink services into Manchester at Bury
- infrastructure improvements at Rawtenstall station
- new stations in keeping with the heritage railway look at Stubbins and Ewood Bridge with a new park and ride facility, cycling and pedestrian links to Haslingden
- use of high quality rolling stock for a high quality travelling experience
- an option for a financially more sustainable future for the existing East Lancashire heritage railway as an operator for the line and much-needed upgrades to lineside infrastructure



THE ROUTE



THE BENEFITS

We have reviewed the level of commuting pressure along both the M66 and through Rochdale onto the M62/M60, demand for a new rail service, the current growth of the local economy and future opportunities to tackle regional inequality. Following a massive response from the public to our survey, 86% of residents and businesses surveyed in 2022 strongly support the development of a rail link.

The key benefits of the new rail link include:



LESS ANNUAL ROAD TRIPS, WITH POTENTIAL FOR MUCH MORE



25-50%
REDUCTION IN CURRENT CAR/BUS JOURNEY TIMES

- transforming the local manufacturing and small business economy, providing a step change in growth for the Rossendale Valley Corridor which will deliver 27 hectares of new employment land over the next 15 years
- better connectivity into a revamped Bury town centre, drawing more footfall
- a major contribution to levelling up the East Lancashire local economy with the rest of the country through better connectivity
- radically improving commuter journey times – making a 25-50% reduction in current car/bus journey times
- a benefit cost ratio between 1.18 and 1.65 along the route, delivering a significant net positive value as an investment to the area's economy
- providing opportunities for Manchester based small businesses to relocate to lower cost business premises
- growing the visitor economy by at least 10-15% visitors annually – drawing up to a further 215,000 visitors each year
- expanding opportunities for growing the evening economy in Bury, Ramsbottom and Rawtenstall
- reducing road congestion – a modest 10% share of commuter flow into Manchester would create half a million less annual road trips, with potential for much more
- significantly reducing carbon emissions by over 1 million road trips annually
- protecting the heritage character of the existing East Lancashire Railway as a tourist attraction

SUMMARY OF THE CONCEPT

The introduction of a heavy rail link running from Rawtenstall, via Ramsbottom, Bury and Heywood and onwards into Manchester Victoria form the core of the proposal. This will provide a rail journey time between Rawtenstall and central Manchester of around 44 minutes. It will improve connectivity for the 82,000 residents who live in Rawtenstall, Ramsbottom and Heywood, as well as the wider populations of Bury and Rossendale along the proposed route.

SUMMARY OF THE CONCEPT

Utilising existing rail lines along the route significantly lessens the cost of the overall project. It requires no significant overhaul or laying of new track and utilises existing train stations and signalling infrastructure along the route.

TRACK

The proposal will utilise the existing Rawtenstall to Bury heavy rail track infrastructure and the track infrastructure between Bury and Heywood. There would be operational independence from Metrolink, removing the risk of issues with existing infrastructure or operations transmitting performance problems onto the Metrolink network. There will be a new track passing loop at Summerseat to improve the flow of trains. All of which will enable an increase in line speed along the route.

STATIONS

The proposal will require some improvements to stations and platforms along the route. This will focus on Rawtenstall, Heywood and new stations at Stubbins and Ewood Bridge. There will be no wholesale rebuild, rather focused specific improvements to platforms, signalling and signage.

ROLLING STOCK

A number of options are available and we have the flexibility to explore attractive rolling stock options that pose fewer infrastructure challenges than a tram-train option. Trains will be designed to fit in with the existing heritage character of the railway, such as the Vivarail Class 230. The customer experience is equivalent to a new train. It has high acceleration capability that will help minimise the need for major infrastructure upgrades. A compatibility assessment of options has been undertaken during the feasibility study.

CONNECTING WITH METROLINK

New pedestrian linkage to the Metrolink network at Bury will provide high quality interchange with Bury – Manchester Metrolink services.

FIT WITH EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY

We value the existing East Lancashire Railway (ELR) heritage line and operation. This is a significant asset for East Lancashire which we wish to retain, see thrive and have a sound financial future. It is an integral part of the local visitor economy and attraction loved by many local people and visitors. The ELR will retain control of all operations on its infrastructure. There is an opportunity with this proposal to expand its current role to also become a professional rail infrastructure and operations organisation with a continuing volunteer element to operate the heritage train service. To do this ELR will need financial support and we are keen to explore the details of how this can be achieved, including the possibility to set up a new co-operative model.



ECONOMIC RATIONALE

The Manchester economy continues to grow. Jobs in the city have increased from 381,000 in 2004 to over 435,000 by 2020 – an increase of over 14% - and its growth is projected to continue. The Northern Gateway will see a £1bn investment over the next 20 years.

The Northern Gateway is of particular significance to Rossendale, bringing an indicative 2.5million m2 of industrial floor space and 9,500 new homes along the M62 corridor at its intersection with the M66 in Rochdale, Oldham and Bury.

Currently nearly 1 in 4 people of working age in Rossendale commute to Manchester each day.

Rossendale is a housing and business growth area. It is a housing destination of choice for thousands of people who work in Manchester.

A 2018 survey showed that currently 79% of these commuters travel by

car and 16% use the bus to get into Manchester. The M66, which runs between Ramsbottom and Simister Island, north of Manchester, is particularly congested. This affects road journeys between central Manchester and Rossendale, most of Bury, and Heywood. Outside central Bury with its Metrolink connection there is no choice other than to use road for at least part of these journeys.

The rail link is a key part of the proposal to open up the Rossendale Growth Corridor. This will see the development of 4 key development sites along the Bury-Rawtenstall-Accrington corridor and be a key economic growth area for Lancashire. The rail link would directly serve sites at Ewood Bridge and New Hall Hey; with forward access by bus interchange to North Carr and Hud Hey.

In the post Covid business world we anticipate that locations such as Rossendale will become more

attractive to business professionals, who through home working will only need to access city centre offices occasionally. This would generate even higher demand levels for the rail link as the number of residents needing to travel could increase.

We commissioned the respected independent body the Centre for Economics and Business Research to analyse the economic case for opening the new rail link. We commissioned international rail experts - Systra - to develop the business case for the rail link. Their detailed evidence base provides a strong backing for the proposal.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Systra have provided a rigorous analysis of the cost of the proposal. This has considered the capital cost for enhancing the infrastructure, maintenance/signalling costs, on-going infrastructure renewal costs and operating costs. The economic appraisal of the scheme has followed Department for Transport transport analysis guidance.

• Capital costs for improvements to the line and station improvement will be up £80m.

This includes:

- station and signalling improvements at Rawtenstall station
- a new passing track loop at Summerseat
- new stations at Stubbins and Ewood Bridge
- new pedestrian link to Bury Market St station
- works to track, fencing, level crossing upgrades and selective line speed upgrades

• Estimated annual operating costs in the region of £3m to £5m (depending on the phasing/timing of the improvement work).

A good proportion of costs will be recovered through fare income.

Revenue costs includes:

- leasing of rolling stock
- track and train maintenance costs
- train fuel and maintenance costs
- staffing costs (ground and on-board staff)

Viability work has identified that the service may require a small subsidy. This is only a modest 5%-10% share of the current commuter market together with a proportionate volume of leisure and business trips. This can be met from current demand and does not account for increased future demand which would further boost income.

The benefit cost ratio for phase 1 has been estimated at 1.18 and at 1.55 for phase 2.

This delivers a significant net positive value as an investment to the local economy. A more detailed breakdown of the scheme costing, demand forecasts and the sensitivity analysis used is available in the Systra business case for the City Valley Rail Link.



NEXT STEPS

We have strong commitment from the councils along the route of the line – Bury Council, Rochdale Council, Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Borough Council. We have strong support from the business community and residents. We have had dialogue with MPs and Transport for Greater Manchester and will continue this to explore more detail of the technical aspects of the proposal.

We have completed the strategic business case for the rail link. This builds a compelling case. This has been sent to the Department for Transport in Autumn 2022 and we look forward to hearing a positive news on the next steps for the project.





Rossendale Borough Council
The Business Centre
Futures Park
Bacup
OL13 0BB