

West Yorkshire Combined Authority Rail Strategy

Executive Summary
2024



West
Yorkshire
Combined
Authority

Tracy
Brabin
Mayor of
West Yorkshire



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Foreword

Our ambition for the rail network in West Yorkshire

As Mayor and Leaders of West Yorkshire we are determined to create a region that works for everyone. We need Government to back our ambitions for a stronger, fairer and better-connected North if we are to achieve this.

The people of our region deserve an integrated transport system fit for the 21st century that is greener, simpler and cheaper. We need better buses, more reliable rail services and a mass transit system.

We want a strong and inclusive economy, with a reliable and efficient transport system, both within our region and beyond. But we are being held back by an ageing rail network and decades of underinvestment.

The rail network plays an important part in the lives of everyone and every business in West Yorkshire, connecting our towns and cities together, and linking our region to the rest of the North.

Passenger services take people to work and education, important appointments, to shops, events and nights out with friends.

Freight services take goods across the Pennines, along the Aire Valley, to and from our seaports and contribute to the economic prosperity of the region. Our Rail Strategy identifies the investment our railways need to meet the expectations of the people of West Yorkshire.

It sets out how we can address the urgent issues impacting our railways, including the need for additional capacity and service frequency to improve passenger experience. It also sets out the infrastructure we need for the future and the long-term investment programme to maintain the existing rail network.

We've looked at what we need from our rail services and infrastructure, identified the gaps that need to be addressed and made recommendations for the future.

But this can't be done in isolation. We need a fully integrated transport network, that brings together rail, bus, mass transit, cycling and walking, that gets people out of the cars, and allows people to choose the best method of transport for their journey.

To deliver our ambitions, we need fairer investment from Government in our railways to help create a reliable, cheaper and easier to use network.

This work underpins our ask to Government and demonstrates how a better rail network in our region will contribute to greater economic growth and prosperity, not just in West Yorkshire but across the North and for the benefit of the whole UK.



Context

Rail Vision

In 2021, we engaged with the public on our draft Rail Vision, as part of our [Connectivity Infrastructure Plan](#).

Our Rail Vision set out our ambition for the way in which the railway needs to serve the region, its people, and businesses in the future. Our Vision put the rail network at the core of a fully integrated transport system of public transport, cycling and walking which

is attractive and conveniently accessible to everyone. We want door-to-door journey times that are reliable and at least as fast as driving connecting people and places both within our region and beyond.

Our railways must also provide an alternative to the road network for the transport of freight, helping to reduce congestion and improve air quality, helping us become a net-zero carbon economy by 2038. At the core of our Vision are four overarching objectives.

Boosting productivity

Helping businesses to grow and invest in the region and their workforce, to drive economic growth, increase innovation and create jobs.



Enabling inclusive growth

Enabling as many people as possible to contribute to, and benefit from, economic growth in our communities and towns.



Tackling the climate emergency

Growing our economy while cutting emissions and caring for our environment.



Delivering 21st century transport

Creating efficient transport infrastructure to connect our communities, making it easier to get to work, do business and connect with each other.



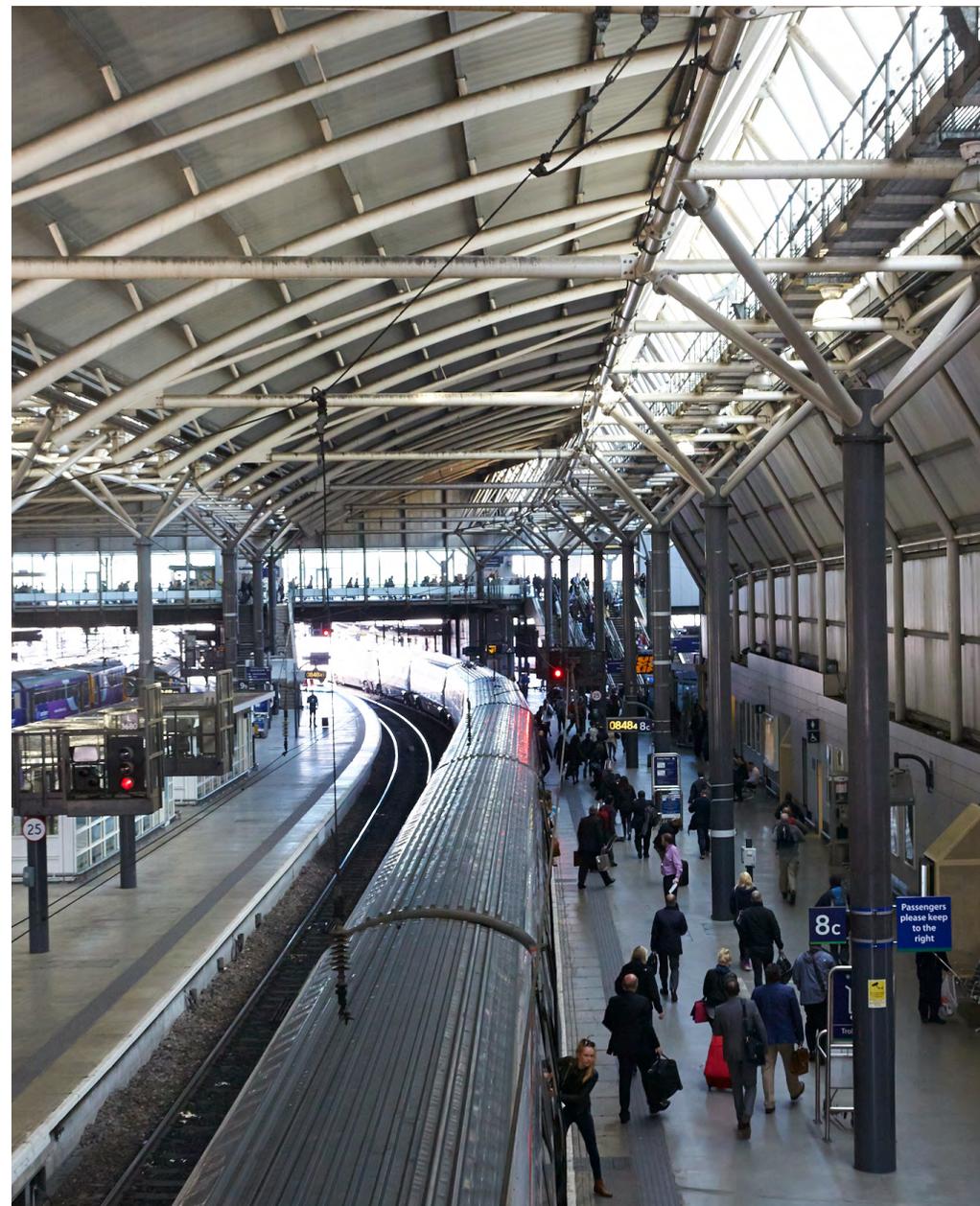
Rail Strategy

Our Rail Strategy sets out our priorities and the next steps and interventions required to deliver our Rail Vision for West Yorkshire up to 2050.

The railway already plays an important and varied role in the lives of West Yorkshire's residents and businesses. Alongside growing freight use, our rail network is making it easier to get to work, do business and connect with each other. However, our rail network needs to evolve to meet the challenges of boosting productivity, enabling inclusive growth, tackling the climate emergency, and delivering 21st century transport.

Our Rail Strategy looks at how we can address the urgent issues such as delivering additional capacity and service frequency, improving passenger experience of travelling by rail. It also looks to the future and our priorities for the development of our railways, transforming national and regional rail connectivity, to level up the United Kingdom. Expanding our labour market and increasing access to jobs through investment in rail is vital for our region, through investments such as the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU), delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) between Leeds and Manchester via Bradford and a new line between Leeds and Sheffield supporting NPR.

This Strategy translates the high-level objectives and outcomes contained in the Vision into priority next steps, a coherent overall strategic framework, and an emerging implementation plan. It also serves as a regional evidence base and policy position for local partners and rail industry stakeholders to use as a basis for making the case for investment in our network.

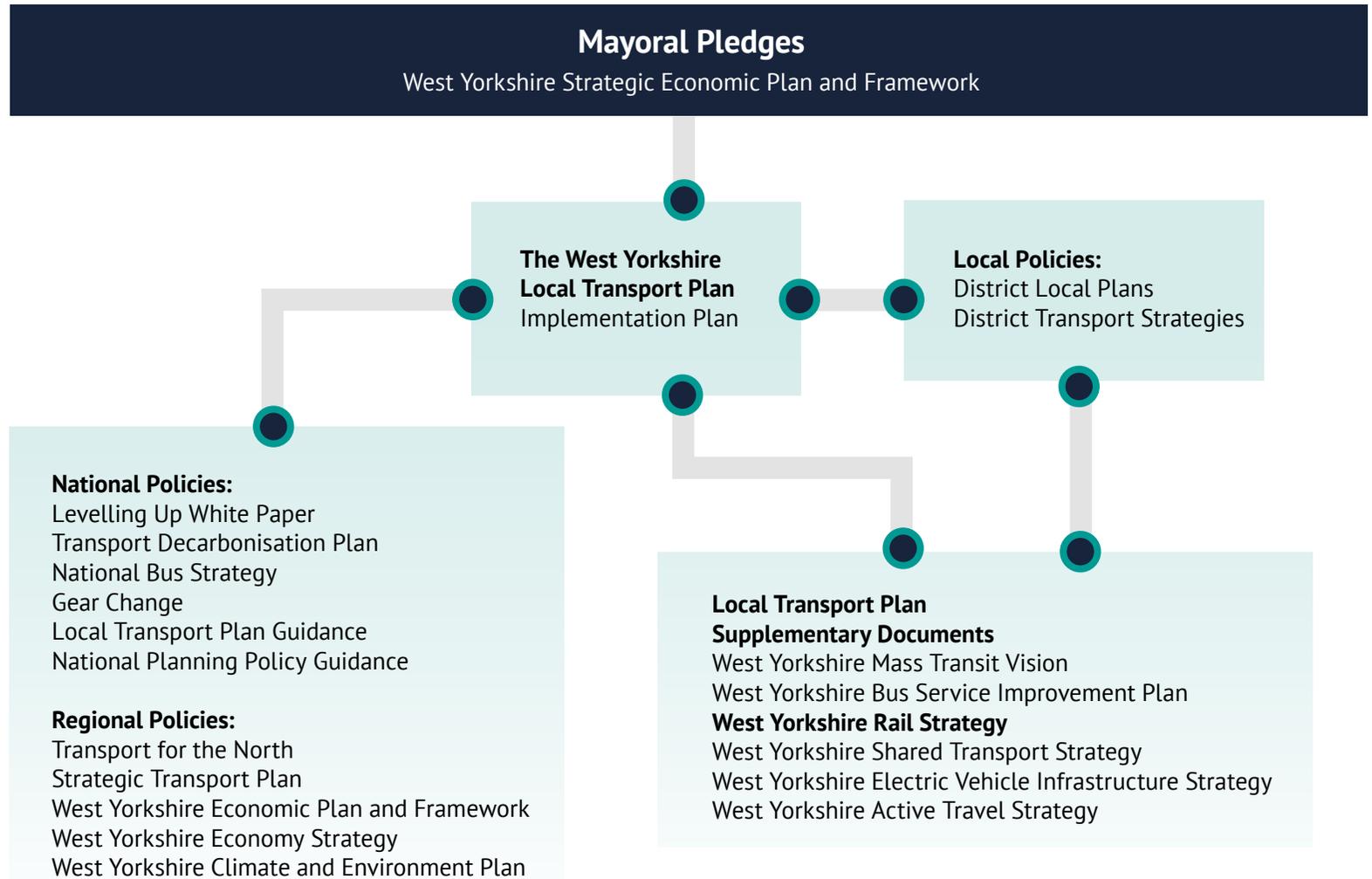


Our emerging Local Transport Plan

The Combined Authority has a statutory duty to produce and keep under review a Local Transport Plan (LTP) on behalf of West Yorkshire. The West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040, adopted by the Combined Authority in August 2017, is our current LTP.

A new Local Transport plan for West Yorkshire is currently being produced, reflecting the significant development in local and wider city region transport policy that has followed since 2017.

The new Local Transport Plan will need to ensure that our vision for integrated transport is one we can all support across West Yorkshire. It will focus on where change is most needed to deliver the strategic ambition of the West Yorkshire Plan, building on recent and planned engagement.



Recognising the intention of the Combined Authority and the five West Yorkshire Councils to pursue one integrated transport strategy for West Yorkshire, the new Local Transport Plan will be co-developed with district partners. A strategic policy framework and implementation plan (including a transport investment pipeline) will be agreed to deliver the actions for change outlined in the West Yorkshire Plan:

Develop an integrated, affordable, sustainable, reliable and resilient transport system that connects all parts of our region, so everyone can access the places they need to live fulfilled lives, boosting productivity, increasing innovation, and creating jobs. We will work collaboratively to ensure West Yorkshire has robust connections across the UK and the world.

Tackle the climate emergency through the fair and inclusive decarbonisation of our transport network, delivering the right choice of transport, in the right place, at the right time.

Make sure everyone can enjoy walking and cycling to ensure good health and a cleaner, greener environment for future generations.

Make our transport system easier to use and understand with a London-style transport network where joined-up journeys become second

Deliver a new mass transit system for West Yorkshire by 2040, which connects communities with an integrated cycling, walking, bus and rail plan, and transforms the transport system for generations to come.

The Rail Strategy will be a supplementary LTP document that sets out our vision, priorities and implementation plan to enable rail to function as part of this single integrated transport network.



The Integrated Rail Plan and Network North

Our Rail Vision strongly supported the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) with a through station in the centre of Bradford and closing the connectivity gaps between our region and East Midlands via Sheffield. These projects would benefit all of our communities, help us achieve our commitment to be a net zero carbon economy by 2038 and help rebalance the UK economy.

The Government published the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) in 2021 and Network North (NN) in 2023. These plans set out the Government's proposals to develop and deliver major rail projects in the North and Midlands. There are significant changes to the plans for HS2 and NPR. HS2 north of Birmingham is essentially cancelled and the land safeguarded for it will be disposed of. Some elements of the government proposal, including the development of a mass transit network in West Yorkshire, investment in the East Coast Main Line, delivery of TRU and the proposed new Bradford station with a link to Huddersfield are beneficial to our region. However, we believe that the government plans do not deliver the investment in inter-regional rail services and infrastructure required to support our economy, decarbonisation and our commitment to net zero by 2038.

Our Rail Strategy sets out our priorities, next steps and interventions we need to ensure our railways are fit for purpose and to deliver our objectives. We would like to work closely with the Government to develop these interventions, both through the IRP, NN and wider service specification and infrastructure enhancement processes.

Our asks of Government:

- Identify and progress an optimal solution for **Leeds station network capacity** in addition to our proposed mass transit system. This should include a T-shaped station alongside other network improvements.
- Deliver the **Leeds Existing Station Programme** so that it can function as a sustainable regional transport hub.
- Deliver the **NPR network** in full that includes Leeds, Bradford and Manchester, including a new through station in the centre of Bradford which could accommodate both NPR and Calder Valley services.
- Improve the connectivity between **West Yorkshire and the East Midlands via Sheffield**.
- Deliver **Transpennine Route Upgrade** as quickly as possible and minimising disruption impacts on local connectivity, communities and businesses.
- Deliver the proposed schemes in the Integrated Rail Plan including **Leeds – Bradford Electrification** and proposed upgrade on the **East Coast Main Line**.
- Deliver a rolling programme to create an **electrified City Region rail network** starting with the Harrogate, Calder Valley and Wakefield Westgate – Sheffield lines.

Why rail investment matters

Investment in rail

West Yorkshire has strong ambitions for growth, and to achieve it we need a reliable and efficient transport system, both in the region and from our region to others.

Our economy and our ambitions are being held back by years of underinvestment.

Currently:

- More than 1 in 5 people in West Yorkshire live in areas within the **10% most deprived in England** (greater than 500,000 people).
- Leeds and Sheffield have a combined GVA of £96 billion per annum and are only 29 miles apart **but most train journeys between them take over an hour.**

Average spending per head on transport in **Yorkshire and the Humber was £3,611** (over the past decade), compared to £4,728 across the UK and £9,502 in London. If the North received the same funding as London since 2015, it would have received £51 billion more.

Why this investment matters

Investment in our rail network will help create jobs and attract investment that would benefit people across the North. The environmental impact of more people moving away from cars to public transport, as well as taking freight off our roads and on to our railways will help us work towards a net zero carbon economy by 2038.

In addition:

A new Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) line between Leeds and Manchester via Bradford city centre and a new line between Leeds and Sheffield could deliver a combined **£84 billion boost to our regional economy** with the potential to support the delivery of 180,000 jobs and 26,000 new homes in the cities of Bradford and Leeds.

As part of TRU, it will support 8,000 roles including 4,000 new jobs and 20% of the new jobs will be from underrepresented groups. TRU will create 500 apprentices and over 30,000 placement days for our young people.

Carbon and freight

Transport emits the most carbon in West Yorkshire, with more than 90% of transport emissions coming from cars and vans. Enabling more journeys by public transport will be integral to us achieving our ambition to tackle the climate emergency. Creating capacity on our railways will be vital if we are to meet this target, making Transpennine Route Upgrade, Northern Powerhouse and high speed, high frequency services from Manchester, Sheffield and East Midlands and beyond even more critical.

To achieve our ambitions, we need the rail network to play a much bigger role in transporting freight. Reducing freight miles on roads will help to achieve our decarbonisation and air quality objectives, improve quality of life in towns and cities across West Yorkshire, and make better use of the strategic road network.

Network capacity is a key constraint, so it is crucial that planning for upgrading the capacity and capability of the rail network accounts for existing and future rail freight growth alongside passenger growth.

Our priorities:

- We strongly support the implementation of increased freight capacity and capability on the Transpennine route.
- We are committed to working with the rail industry and our council partners to identify and support future rail freight growth, including promotion of new interchange sites.
- Following the publication of the West Yorkshire Freight Strategy, we will look to establish a Freight Forum and will develop responses with other transport modes as part of the Local Transport Plan.
- We will support closing gaps in the electrified freight network and developing the last-mile solutions that freight companies need.



The role of rail in delivering our objectives

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruption to society, and to the way our economy functions, with a major impact on the usage of public transport. Rail demand has returned strongly across our region with most routes carrying similar numbers of passengers to before the pandemic. However, trains across the network are carrying fewer passengers in the traditional morning peaks, with demand now spread more evenly. Some routes, especially at weekends, now carry more passengers than pre-Covid levels.

Now there is greater understanding of post-Covid travel patterns and the strength of rail demand, there is a clear opportunity for rail to provide the capacity to support our ambitions for decarbonisation and inclusive economic growth. At a time of macroeconomic uncertainty, and rising energy costs and costs of living, people across our region require a reliable, affordable and convenient alternative to travelling by car.

Decarbonisation

Addressing the climate emergency is an overriding priority. This requires significant changes in the way our region's businesses and communities function – and the way we behave as individuals – to fulfil our pledge of reaching net-zero carbon by 2038.

Transport has a large role to play, with road transport the largest contributor of emissions. Rail can unlock real change, given its inherent energy-efficiency and the ability to decarbonise via electrification. There is an opportunity to reimagine the role of rail freight to

better complement road haulage, while providing many wider economic and environmental benefits.

Within our West Yorkshire Climate and Environment Plan, the 'Carbon Reduction Pathways' show the scale of the challenge for rail. A 60% increase in rail travel, alongside changes across all industries, would take us towards net zero by 2038 – but to reach it we need even more ambitious growth in rail as a core component of our net-zero strategy.

Sustainable and inclusive growth

Rail has a crucial role to play in achieving our priorities of sustainable and inclusive growth. Improving our network and increasing the number of passengers will help provide access to vital employment, education and training opportunities to help 'level up' our region. Businesses in the region value our rail network highly, and opening new opportunities to access

it will allow them to access a wider pool of skilled workers across West Yorkshire and beyond.

Rail's benefits as a sustainable mode are not felt equally across our region. For example, services to, from, and between the 'Five Towns' in the south-east of the county are slow, infrequent, and use ageing trains. Apart from Leeds, our other regional hubs do not have good connectivity to the wider national network.

A rail service to support decarbonisation and sustainable growth

Our Rail Vision sets out what the rail service in West Yorkshire needs to look like to attract passengers and freight to rail as a mode of choice, to support the wider decarbonisation and sustainable growth objectives.

The following points summarise our ambition and our intended outcomes for our rail service offer, noting these are subject to developing affordable, deliverable and value for money solutions.

An all-day, all-week service

with service frequency reflecting when passengers want to travel, including early morning, late evening and weekend peak periods.

Frequent local and inter-regional services

a minimum service frequency of two evenly spaced trains per hour, with enhanced frequencies connecting sub-regional centres and other larger towns, allowing people to travel when they need to.

An integrated public transport offer

where ticketing, information, interchange facilities and timetables are planned to make the door-to-door public transport journey, across all of West Yorkshire, as simple and convenient as possible.

Quick journey times

so that the public transport offer is as competitive with car as possible.

An attractive longer-distance service

with a minimum of two fast trains per hour frequency connecting to our neighbouring regional centres and an hourly opportunity further afield – including services from Bradford, Wakefield, Huddersfield and Halifax to better access pan-regional and national opportunities.

Capacity and capability for future demand

allowing us to accommodate at a minimum the 60% increase in passenger-kilometres and a 155% increase in freight tonne-kilometres needed to support decarbonisation in the region.

Consistent service quality

so that all parts of the region enjoy a high standard of station facilities and design which integrates stations with the communities they serve, rolling stock that meets passengers' expectations and a punctual service that passengers and business can rely on.

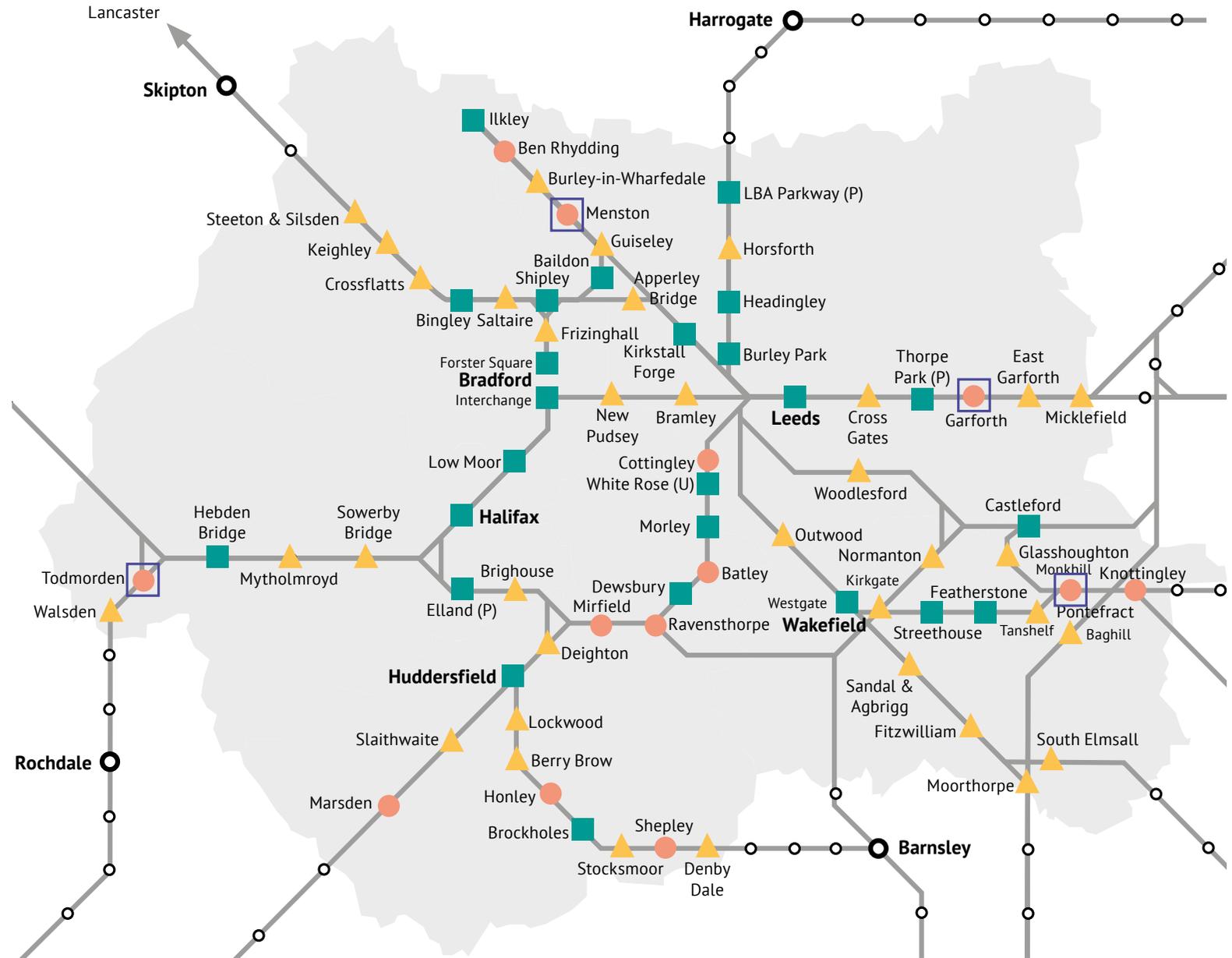
West Yorkshire rail station accessibility

Accessible stations make it easier for people to visit friends, get to the shops or to work. Accessibility benefits everyone – people with health conditions or impairments, people with children, heavy luggage or shopping and some older people. It's also good for the economy and means fewer car journeys, less congestion and carbon emissions. However, **71% of stations in West Yorkshire do not meet the latest standards for step-free access.**

Station accessibility

- Step-free
- ▲ Step-free but not fully accessible
- Not step-free
- Committed scheme

Stations along the Manchester – Huddersfield – Leeds Transpennine route will be made step-free as part of the TRU programme (timescales to be confirmed).



(P) proposed new stations
 (U) White Rose will replace Cottingley

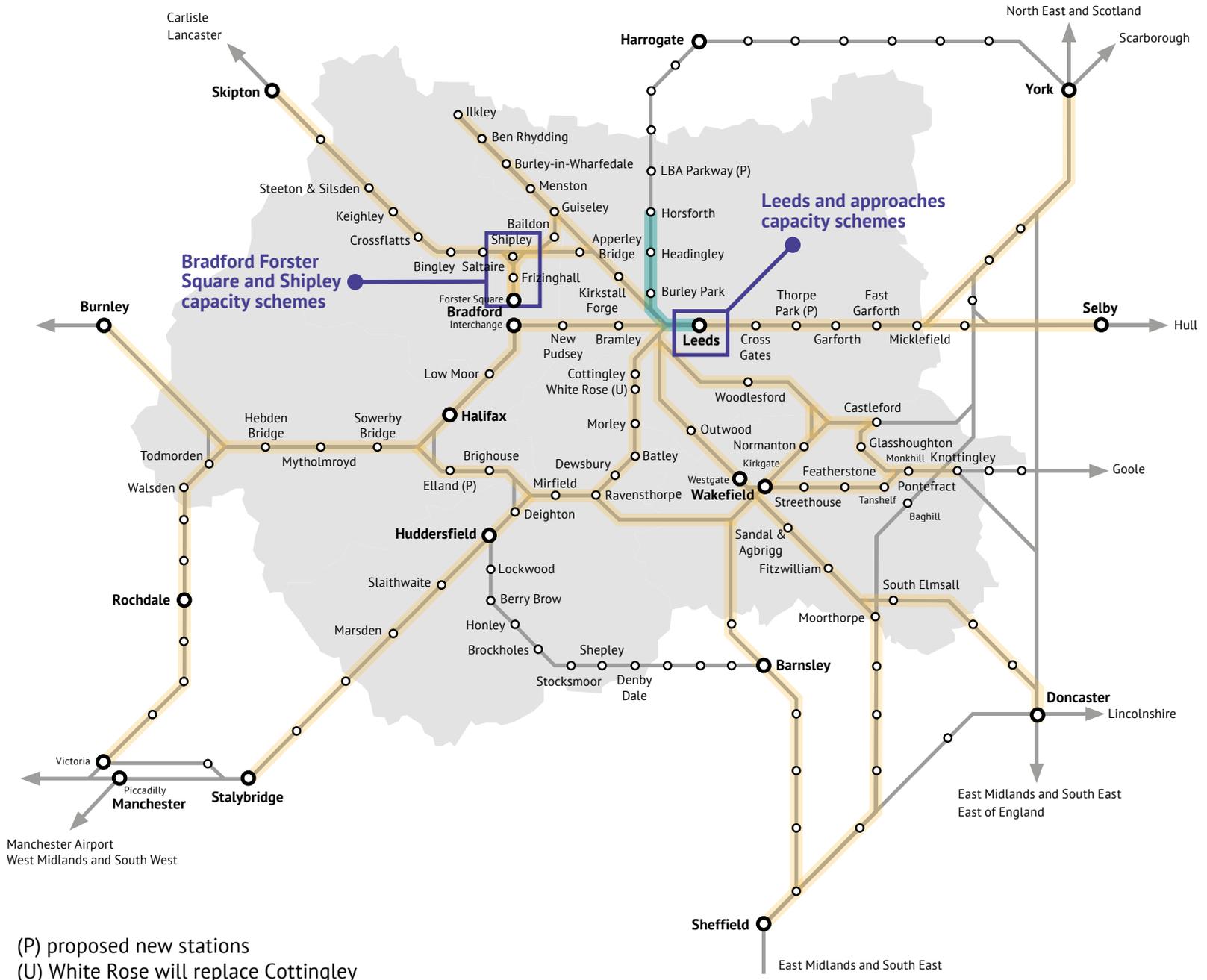
Interventions required in a no-growth scenario

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented disruption to society with a major impact on the usage of public transport. Rail demand, however, has returned strongly across our region. While there is still uncertainty around the long-term impact on rail demand, our rail network is constrained today as a result of years of underinvestment. Even taking the most pessimistic view of no-growth in rail usage, our rail network will still require significant investment.

The diagram summarises the interventions the region requires in the short and medium terms. These interventions are necessary in addition to mass transit. Mass transit complements rather than replaces the need for rail investment.

- Longer trains
- Additional peak trains
- Other interventions

Because of historic underinvestment, even without further growth, trains need to be longer to provide enough capacity and avoid passengers being crowded off the railway.



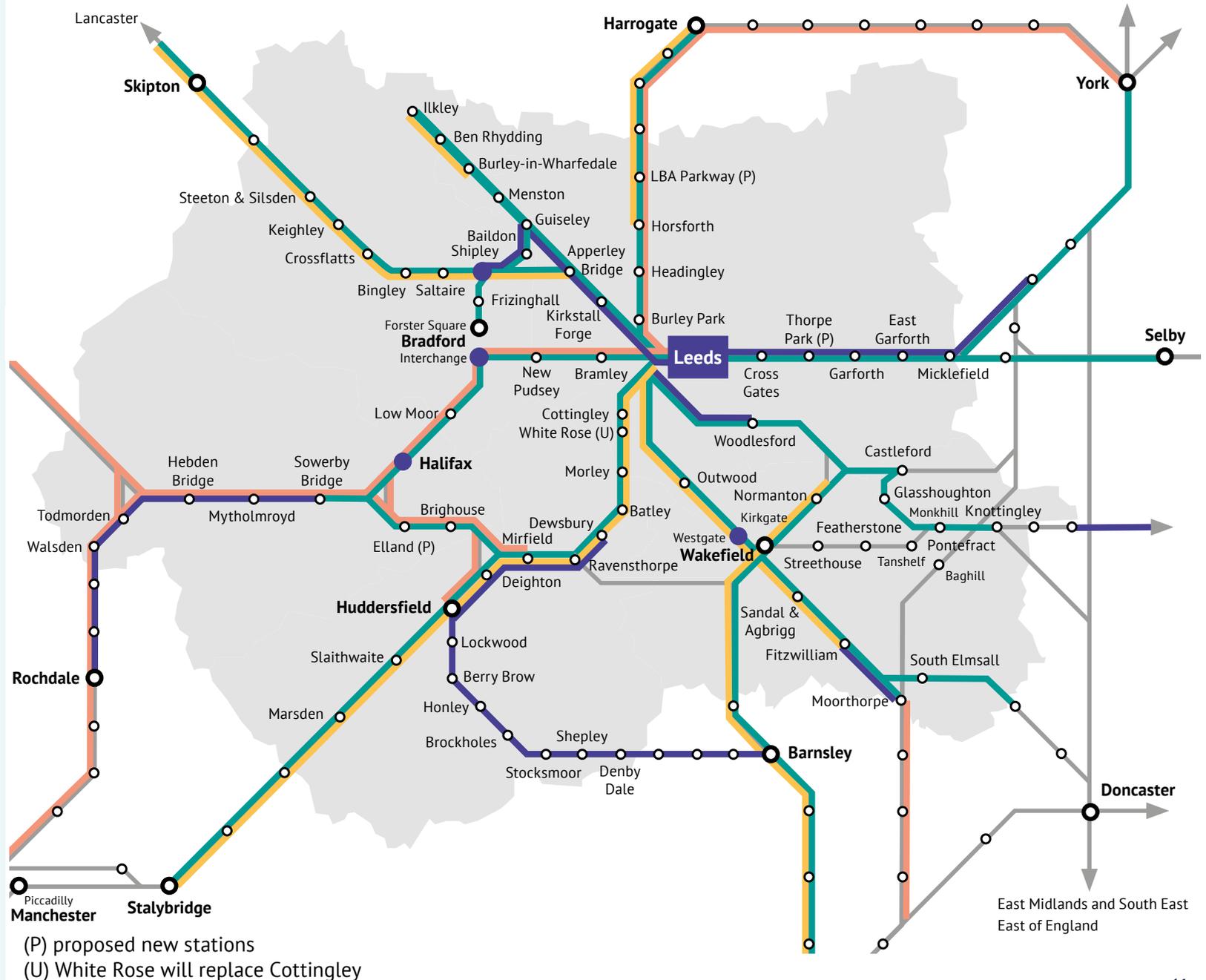
Interventions required to meet our region's objectives

Rail can play a significant role in meeting our region's ambitions for decarbonisation and inclusive growth. Our rail network needs to be significantly improved so that rail travel can be a viable and attractive option as part of an integrated public transport offer.

The diagram sets out the key interventions required to meet those objectives if we are serious about tackling climate emergency and enabling inclusive economic growth. These are in addition to the 'no regret' investment.

- Longer trains
- Signalling improvements
- Other capacity enhancements e.g. tracks
- Electrification priorities (first phase) associated rolling stock improvements.

Capacity requirements will be required beyond our region, including York, Manchester and Sheffield.



Wider rail network – Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), Network North and beyond

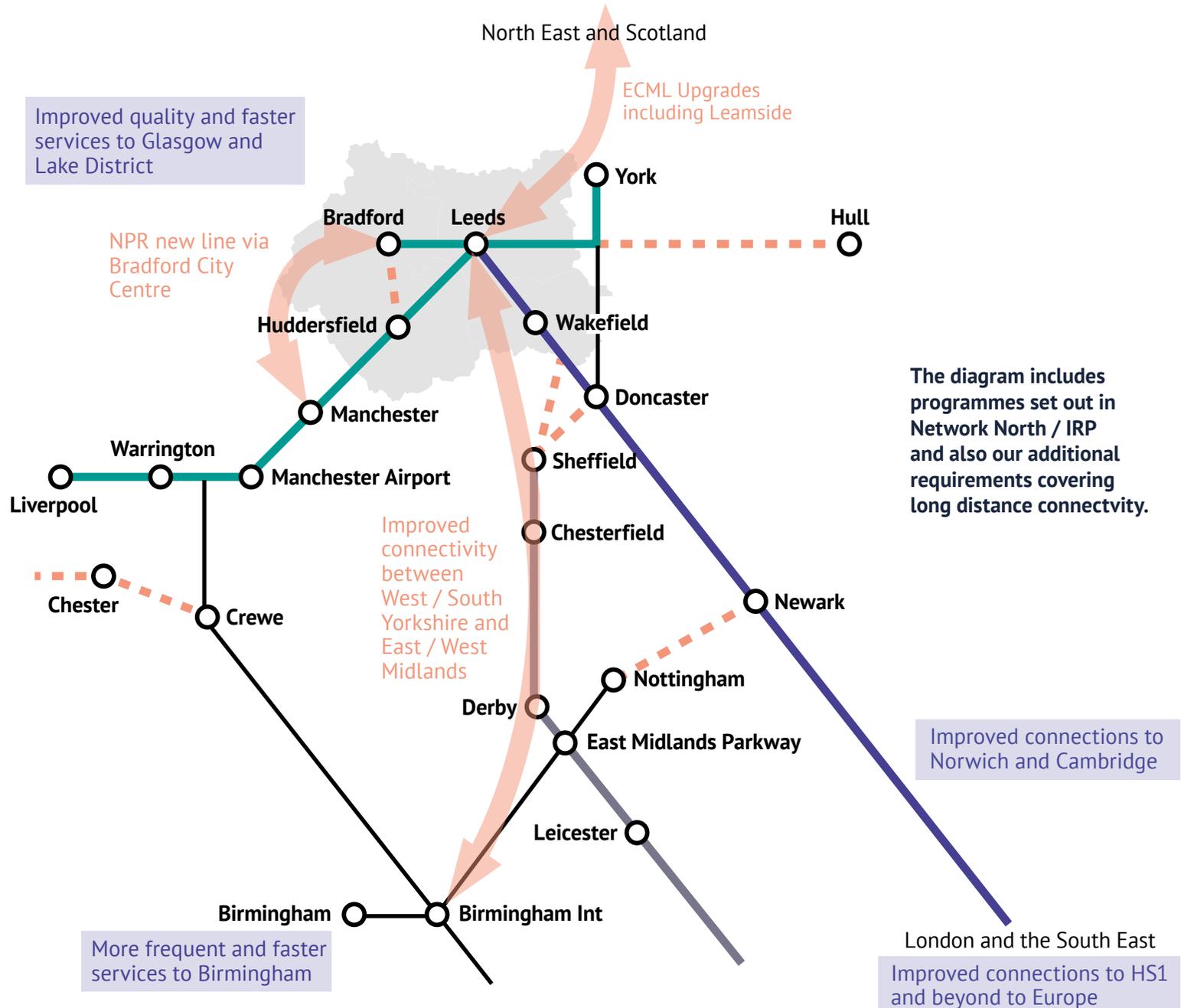
Connectivity to other major cities and towns beyond our region is important to our economy. Most of our inter-city services, however, are operated on a mixed-use railway which is already operating at capacity and will be struggling to operate increased services. It is important that any major national rail investment programmes can be developed and delivered in an integrated manner to release vital rail capacity for enhanced local and regional services, as well as increased freight traffic. While Government's 2021 Integrated Rail Plan and 2023 Network North made beneficial commitments to deliver TRU plus a new Bradford station with a link to Huddersfield, these commitments are not enough to deliver the investment required to support our region's economy and our commitment to decarbonisation.

Integrated Rail Plan and Network North

- NPR Core / TPRU
- - - Network North Proposals
- East Coast Main Line Upgrade
- Midland Main Line (MML) upgrade
- Existing Rail Network

Requirements beyond IRP and NN

- Infrastructure requirements
- Connectivity improvements



Rail strategy priorities

A summary of our strategic priorities in the short, medium and long terms.

| | SHORT Less than 5 years | MEDIUM 5–10 years | LONG 10+ years |
|--|---|--|-------------------|
| Delivering capacity for growth | Station capacity at Leeds (station, platforms and tracks). | Fill the strategic rail connectivity gaps including Bradford-Manchester, Leeds-Sheffield, and between West Yorkshire and Birmingham and the East Midlands. | |
| | Extra track and on-train capacity across the network. | | |
| | Service improvements with additional rolling stock to enable growth. (Five Towns, Penistone Line, Brighouse, and South of Wakefield). | | |
| | Reinstate services withdrawn during Covid wherever appropriate. | Implement major rail investment programmes included in Integrated Rail Plan and Network North including ECML, NPR, Bradford-Huddersfield link, Leeds-Sheffield and Leeds-Hull electrification. | |
| Improving station facilities and train services | Identified Gateway schemes and car park extension. | | |
| | Accessibility improvements and access improvements focussing on active travel. | Whole-industry smart ticketing programmes. | |
| | New rail stations at Elland, Thorpe Park, White Rose and Leeds Bradford Airport. | Development works on new station locations and routes. | |
| Decarbonisation | Transpennine Route Upgrade | | |
| | Replacement of legacy Northern fleet with new electric and multimodal units | Further programme of electrification and rolling stock improvements. | |
| Freight | Increased freight capacity on the Transpennine route and local freight interchange facilities. | | |

Further information on these priorities can be found in our implementation plan

Implementation plan

The table below presents how we will deliver our Strategy through the funding and the delivery mechanisms available to us. It also provides an indication of the timescales of specific actions and next steps.

We want to establish a formal working relationship with the new industry body, Great British Railways (GBR).

We hope to work with GBR to deliver improvements across our rail network and ensure that passengers in West Yorkshire feel the benefits that industry reform can offer.

Currently, the majority of rail investment is dependent on Government funding. Our ambition is to have increased local control over the investment in our rail network.

| Scheme or priority | Timeframe | Stage of development | Local funding | Central government funding |
|--|----------------|------------------------|---|---|
| Reinstate services withdrawn during Covid wherever appropriate. | Short | Delivery | |  |
| Complete gateway schemes at five of our biggest stations (Leeds, Bradford Forster Square and Interchange, Huddersfield, and Halifax). | Short | Development / delivery |  |  |
| Complete major accessibility improvements at Menston, Garforth, Pontefract Monkhill and Todmorden and secure funding for further major accessibility improvements. | Short | Delivery / development |  |  |
| Deliver minor station accessibility improvements across the region. | Short | Delivery |  |  |
| Deliver car park extensions as appropriate to be identified in our emerging park and ride study. | Short | Delivery |  |  |
| Identify and reach agreement on a cross-industry solution for capacity and capability at Leeds station. | Short | Development |  |  |
| Provide evidence to support service improvements such as Five Towns, Brighouse, Penistone line and South of Wakefield to support economic growth. Argue the case for additional rolling stock to support growth. | Short / medium | Feasibility | |  |

| Scheme or priority | Timeframe | Stage of development | Local funding | Central government funding |
|---|----------------|---------------------------|---|---|
| Support investment to provide extra track and on-train capacity across the network. | Short / medium | Feasibility / development | |  |
| Identify further gaps in station accessibility and develop a pipeline of improvements with a key focus on cycling and walking access. | Short / medium | Feasibility / development |  |  |
| Deliver new rail stations at Elland, Thorpe Park, White Rose, and Leeds Bradford Airport. | Short / medium | Development / delivery |  |  |
| Support the implementation of Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU), with a focus on maximising benefits and minimising the impacts of disruption. Specifically support implementation of increased freight capacity and capability on the Transpennine route. | Short / medium | Development / delivery |  |  |
| Develop evidence and supporting initiatives in relation to local freight interchange facilities and rail network capability and establish a Freight Forum following the publication of West Yorkshire Freight Strategy. | Short / medium | Feasibility | |  |
| Develop the case for electrification on our priority Tier 1 routes (Harrogate, Calder Valley and Wakefield Westgate/Sheffield lines) including rolling stock improvements. | Medium / long | Feasibility | |  |
| Support the implementation of all investment identified in the Integrated Rail Plan and Network North including Leeds-Bradford electrification, new Bradford station, Bradford-Huddersfield link, Leeds-Sheffield and Leeds-Hull electrification and ECML upgrades. | Medium / long | Development | |  |
| Carry out further works on identified locations and routes which currently have no access to the rail network. | Medium / long | Feasibility |  |  |
| Fill the strategic rail connectivity gaps including Bradford-Manchester, Leeds-Sheffield, and between West Yorkshire and Birmingham and the East Midlands. | Medium / long | Feasibility | |  |
| Provide inputs and support to whole-industry smart ticketing programmes. | Medium / long | Feasibility | |  |

Find out more
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