

Subject:	City Valley Link		Status:	For publication	
Report to:	Cabinet		Date:	10 th November	
Report of:	Chief Executive		Portfolio Holder:	Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Economic Development	
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Forward Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached:	No	
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	Required:	No	Attached:	No	
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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. For Cabinet to note the progress on the project.
- 1.2. For Cabinet to accept £100,000 from Lancashire County Council and authorise the Monitoring Officer to enter into a grant funding agreement.
- 1.3. For Cabinet to accept the Restoring Your Railway grant of upto £50,000 (exact amount to be confirmed), and authorise the Monitoring Officer to enter into a grant funding agreement and release the required £16,666 council match funding from reserves.
- 1.4. To authorise a strategic outline business case study and tender up to £166,666 in partnership with Lancashire County Council and to delegate the subsequent award of contract to the Director of Economic Director and Portfolio Holder.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 To update Cabinet on the progress made with the City Valley Link project and approve the next stage to undertake a strategic outline business case.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The closure of the passenger railway to Rawtenstall was one of the last "Beeching" closures in the country. In doing so, it cut off Rawtenstall, Ewood Bridge (for Helmshore and Haslingden), Stubbins, Ramsbottom and Summerseat from the rail network. Rossendale was left as the only borough in Lancashire without a rail link. Collectively, these are some of the largest towns in the county without a rail station.
- 3.2. The East Lancashire Railway Trust reopened the route to heritage trains to Ramsbottom in 1987 and to Rawtenstall in 1991. Rossendale, Bury and Rochdale councils own the track bed with a long lease granted to the East Lancashire Light Railway Company to operate trains. The Trust is made up of four parties: Rossendale Council, Bury Council, Rochdale Council and the Company who are responsible for the strategy of the railway and maintenance of the infrastructure. The heritage railway has grown significantly in recent years and now attracts around 180,000 visitors per year. However, Covid restrictions have disrupted the operation and finances.

4. THE CITY VALLEY LINK PROPOSAL

4.1. Local businesses, residents and the council are keen to see the development of a passenger rail link between Rawtenstall and Bury, to interchange with the Metrolink, to provide a good quality journey into Manchester. The rail link is a critical part of both growing the local economy and enabling local people a much improved journey time into Manchester.

4.2. In 2020, the council commissioned CEBR (supported by Ricardo) to examine if this concept is realistic and viable. Ricardo are one the country's leading, signalling and technical consultants. The strategic case for the passenger connection can be found in the CEBR report (available as a background paper). The key messages include:

- Currently about 50% of Rossendale's resident workforce leave the borough for work each day, 55% of whom travel to Manchester. However, chronic road congestion, severely compromises the effectiveness of the current road transport system.
- Better strategic transport links are vital if the corridor from East Lancashire through Bury and into Manchester is to achieve its potential as an integral part of the wider GM economy.
- A range of options, using different transport modes, have been explored with rail based options offering the greatest strategic transport benefits.

4.3. The principle of the project has strong local support. A City Valley Link Steering Group has been set up. Support for Government funding of further development work has been obtained from local MPs, the Mayor for Greater Manchester, Lancashire County Council and Transport for Greater Manchester. There is strong local business support. The link could provide a boost to the local economy as well as enabling local commuters quicker access to Manchester.

4.4. The proposal is to create an integrated heritage and passenger railway that maintains the much-loved heritage offer whilst providing a frequent and reliable passenger solution. The rail service would meet the Metrolink network at a purpose built station at the junction of the two systems at Buckley Wells Interchange. A seamless connection will take place with customers leaving the link here to travel forward with Metrolink. More details of the proposal are contained in Appendix A and B.

4.5. Fit with the East Lancashire Railway

The council values the existing ELR heritage line and operation. This is a significant asset for East Lancashire which we wish to see thrive and have a sound longer-term financial future. Change can be challenging but we believe the concept presents both opportunities for ELR, and reassurance for the long-term financial protection of the heritage operation. As such in developing the proposal will aim to achieve the following:

- Protect the existing heritage operation
- Create an opportunity for a more financially sustainable ELR
- Support for volunteers

4.6. Restoring Your Railway application

The Government invited bids for the third round of this programme in Spring 2021. Sponsored by the MP for Rossendale, Jake Berry, and supported by the MP for Hyndburn, Sara Britcliffe, the council has submitted a "Restoring Your Railway 3" application to the

Department for Transport. It was announced in the Governments October 2021 Budget that the council has been successful and will receive grant funding of upto £50k (the actual amount has not yet been released), the council will be required to match fund an additional 25%.

4.7. Lancashire County Council – Transport Authority

Lancashire CC have identified this as a key project in their Transport Plan for the county and strongly support the project. They are partners in the “Restoring Your Railway” funding bid and provided a letter of support. They have confirmed that £100,000 is also being made available to support this projects next steps and will work in partnership with us on this proposal.

5. THE STRATEGIC OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

5.1. The next stage of the project is to establish a strategic outline business case. This will explore and test the options and determine the benefits and costs. If proven, an outline, and then full business case, would follow along UK Treasury guidance to prepare the project for Government funding. The business case will examine the following areas:

- Strategic
- Economic
- Commercial
- Financial
- Management

5.2. This in-depth work will be tendered based upon an agreed scope of work with the Transport Authority, Lancashire CC, who will be providing expertise to the project. The make up of the funding for the business case will be known once the amount of Restoring Your Railway grant is announced. The bid being successful will enable a more detailed case to be produced. The scope for the tender will be designed to ensure we remain within the budget envelope.

5.3. The council would like to involve all organisations affected by the proposal to be involved in discussing the emerging outcomes in order to shape the final detail of the case. The council is working hard to engage transport bodies, ELR, local businesses and the community. Engaging in discussing the emerging findings will ensure the proposal is a good ‘fit’ with the needs of the business community, residents and the ELR, along the route of the line. Failure to engage in the process will close down opportunities for organisations to shape the final detail of the case.

6. RISK

6.1. The council carries a strategic risk in not undertaking the strategic business case. To do so would close down opportunities to grow the local economy and meet the needs of residents. The council has listened to local businesses and will commission new consultation to gain up to date resident views on the proposal and will embark on more extensive business and community engagement to explain the proposal.

6.2. There is a risk of the strategic outline business case generating a low benefit/cost ratio. A ratio of 1.5+:1 is required to meet the Department of Transport’s threshold to proceed. Failure to achieve this at strategic outline business case could delay the projects’ forward plan. This is mitigated by the positive early strategic case for investment by CEBR and recent refresh that show that the proposal could be credible.

6.3. The council is keen to protect the existing heritage line operation and to ensure the City Valley Link proposal adds value. The council is undertaking the business case to explore the very issue of viability, feasibility and an effective technical solution. The business case will provide an objective conclusion on these issues.

7. FINANCE

7.1 Capital funding for the design and construction of the infrastructure and alterations necessary to deliver the line will be sought ultimately from central Government. The cost of the strategic outline business case will be between £100k and £166k. The final cost of the activity will be determined by the outcome from the Restoring Your Railways bid. Lancashire CC have committed £100k to the project. This report seeks authority to accept the £100k from Lancashire County Council and authorise the Monitoring Officer to enter into a grant funding agreement.

7.2. This report further seeks authority to accept the Restoring Your Railway grant of up to £50k and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to enter into a grant funding agreement. The council is required to provide up to £16,666 of match funding as a requirement of the bid. This will be committed from the council's transitional reserve.

8. LEGAL

8.1 In compliance with the Consitution, Cabinet is required to authorise the acceptance of grants and give approval to officers to go out to tender for contracts for services over £100k. The contract value of the strategic outline business case will depend on the funding awarded and the specification will reflect the budget envelope. The tender will be carried out in compliance with Contract Procudure Rules and Public Contract Regulations as applicable. All grant funding agreements will be entered into once necessary approvals are in place.

9. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None.

10. CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Progressing the City Valley Rail Link provides a fantastic opportunity to both grow the local economy and enable thousands of local people who commute into Manchester, to improve their journey time significantly.

The proposal has strong support from local businesses and people. If the council progresses to this next stage it brings the prospect of reopening a commuter line a real step closer. Lancashire County Council have backed their commitment to improving infrastructure in Rossendale by providing funding to enable the project to progress. The council will work closely with its neighbouring authorities and their communities as the outcomes from the strategic business case emerge.

Background Papers

Document	Place of Inspection
Appendix A	CEBR 2021 update slides
Appendix B	City Valley Link Brochure
CEBR 2018 Early Strategic Case for Investment	https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/14965/cebr_report_-_rail_options_2018



The City – Valley Link

Member briefing

February 2021



Focus for the briefing

- Update on the City Valley rail link proposal
- Exploring what the refreshed proposal looks like
- Financial overview
- Getting the right stakeholders on board

The refreshed concept

- A reliable journey time of under 1 hour between Rawtenstall and Manchester city centre that will compete with bus/car, by offering:
 - through ticketing
 - integrated timetabling with Metrolink to minimise connection times
 - hop on hop off type facility with potential for smart ticketing in future
- An hourly frequency during the day and evenings with higher frequencies at peak times, e.g. 2-3 trains per hr. is envisaged.
- Frequent Metrolink services provide convenient interchange for southbound trips
- The battery powered Vivarail Class 230 train provides a promising (high quality) rolling stock solution. These could be leased, are environmentally sustainable, and have lower operating costs than traditional alternatives
- Infrastructure improvements at Rawtenstall and Buckley Wells stations
- An option for a financially more sustainable future for the existing East Lancashire heritage railway

Proposed route (and existing network)



Benefits

- 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
- 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
- providing opportunities for Manchester based small businesses to relocate to lower cost business premises
- reducing carbon emissions by over 1 million road trips annually
- protecting the heritage character of the existing East Lancashire Railway as a major tourist attraction
- 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 and Rawtenstall
- reducing road congestion – a modest 10% share of commuter flow into Manchester would create 1 million less annual road trips, with potential for much more

Financial overview

- High level indication of costs
- Ballpark range for capital costs is around **£20m to £40m**
- Annual operating costs are likely to be within the **£2.5m to £5m** range – fares will recoup a proportion of these costs
- We have projected trip numbers for a range of assumptions about the share of the commuter market that rail can attract. For a 10% share we estimate approximately 1m annual rail trips on the line
- We have also estimated fare revenue, using an average £5 per passenger. In order to cover the estimated operating costs, we estimate between 0.5m and 1m passengers are needed per year, i.e. a 5%-10% share of the commuter market together with a commensurate volume of leisure and business trips

The service could be operated by the ELR. ELR would provide separate infrastructure management and public transport operating functions. An associated support package could help secure ELRs future and provide a funding source for development projects to help it achieve its long term vision, e.g. the extension to Castlefield.

Share of commuter flows	Total trips	Total revenue
5%	500,296	£ 2,501,482
10%	1,000,593	£ 5,002,964
15%	1,500,887	£ 7,504,436
20%	2,001,184	£ 10,005,918
25%	2,501,480	£ 12,507,400

Potential role of East Lancashire Railway

- Option of an integrated approach to the overall operation and management of the ELR.
- ELR retain control of all operations on its infrastructure.
- A possible approach to setting up a new organisation is the co-operative model
- ELR change from a voluntary organisation to a professional rail infrastructure and operations organisation (dependent on leadership and resources) with a continuing volunteer element to operate the heritage train service.
- Financial support required to take on its more complex role.
- Heritage operations continuing largely as now, with a volunteer workforce operating the services etc.
- Long-term benefits for the ELR could include a funding deal to put it on a more sound long term financial footing

We envisage a future ELR with three integrated but distinct business units:

- an Infrastructure Manager, responsibility for maintaining the fixed assets and allocating capacity
- an Operator for the heritage trains, relying on a mainly voluntary workforce, as now;
- an Operator for the public passenger service, with a professional workforce.

How might the timetable work?

- A consistent 'commuter' timetable throughout the year.
 - If a running time of 25 minutes between Buckley Wells and Rawtenstall can be achieved, an hourly service could be provided with a single train.
 - To provide additional capacity within existing infrastructure constraints, peak time services could be 'flighted' i.e. 2 or more trains following each other in the same direction at short headways
 - Weekends are key to ELR operation and services run all year, with two or three steam / diesel trains operating on the route throughout the day. Capacity is fully utilised on 3 train days and heavily constrained on 2 train days. Similarly capacity is more fully utilised on weekdays when there is an 'event day', of which there are around 4 per year. The rest of the time it appears possible to operate a regular passenger rail service with broadly the current level of operational capacity
- It appears that there is sufficient capacity to offer a regular passenger rail service on weekdays, with the exception of approximately four 'event' days per year, when well advertised, high quality bus substitutions could provide service continuity;
 - In order to offer regular passenger rail services 7 days a week, additional capacity would need to be created and the ELR weekend timetable would need to be recast.

Journey time

- The current max line speed along the route is 25mph
- To achieve the end-to-end journey time of around 25 mins needed for a resilient service, more detailed study of the train performance in relation to the infrastructure will be needed
- This work would identify whether selective line speed increases are required e.g. work to increase the line speed between Bury and Ramsbottom to max 40 mph (if so, issues would need to be addressed, including hazard identification, risk assessment and mitigating measures, fencing and crossings, track and structure condition)

- Commuter trains, with rapid acceleration and deceleration, could achieve the following running times (omitting a stop at Summerseat):

Line speed	B Wells – Ramsbottom	Ramsbottom – Rawtenstall	Station Dwell Times	Overall
25mph	13-16 mins	12-13 mins	3 mins	28 – 32 mins
40 mph	9-10 mins	9-10 mins	3 mins	22 - 23 mins

Infrastructure and signalling

- Infrastructure and signalling are expensive to upgrade and changes are difficult to reverse – where new trains are being procured, capacity improvement can be achieved through inherent speed and acceleration improvements
- ‘Agile’ trains are a preferable means of increasing capacity over complex infrastructure upgrades, where possible
- Infrastructure maintenance costs will increase with a more intense service and the time available for repairs will decrease
- Design, installation and maintenance of complex infrastructure or signalling must be considered in context of staff and skills available
- The ‘line sections’ between Bury, Ramsbottom and Rawtenstall are around 4 miles long and take 10-18 minutes to traverse. Only a single train is permitted in each section at a time.
- Rawtenstall station can only handle a single train with the current signalling arrangement.
- Limited crossing loop capacity is a key constraint e.g. 2 of 3 platform faces at Bury Bolton Street are regularly occupied by ELR services, platform faces at Ramsbottom are occupied with some service pattern, Rawtenstall cannot be used to cross trains in the absence of new signalling

The preference is to provide the additional capacity needed to operate a reliable service through rolling stock capability and selective line speed improvements as far as possible. Some signalling enhancements, i.e. to enable Rawtenstall station to handle two trains simultaneously, are also required.

Proposed rolling stock solution

- A small fleet of leased Vivarail Class 230 trains
- This is a high quality, 'off the shelf' rolling stock solution that is capable of battery powered operation
- It uses 'upcycled' bodysells and bogey sets from recently retired London Underground District Line trains, providing a customer experience that is equivalent to a new train
- These trains offer good acceleration ("agile train capability") that will help minimise the need for infrastructure and signalling upgrades
- A environmentally sustainable option, with zero emissions from operation



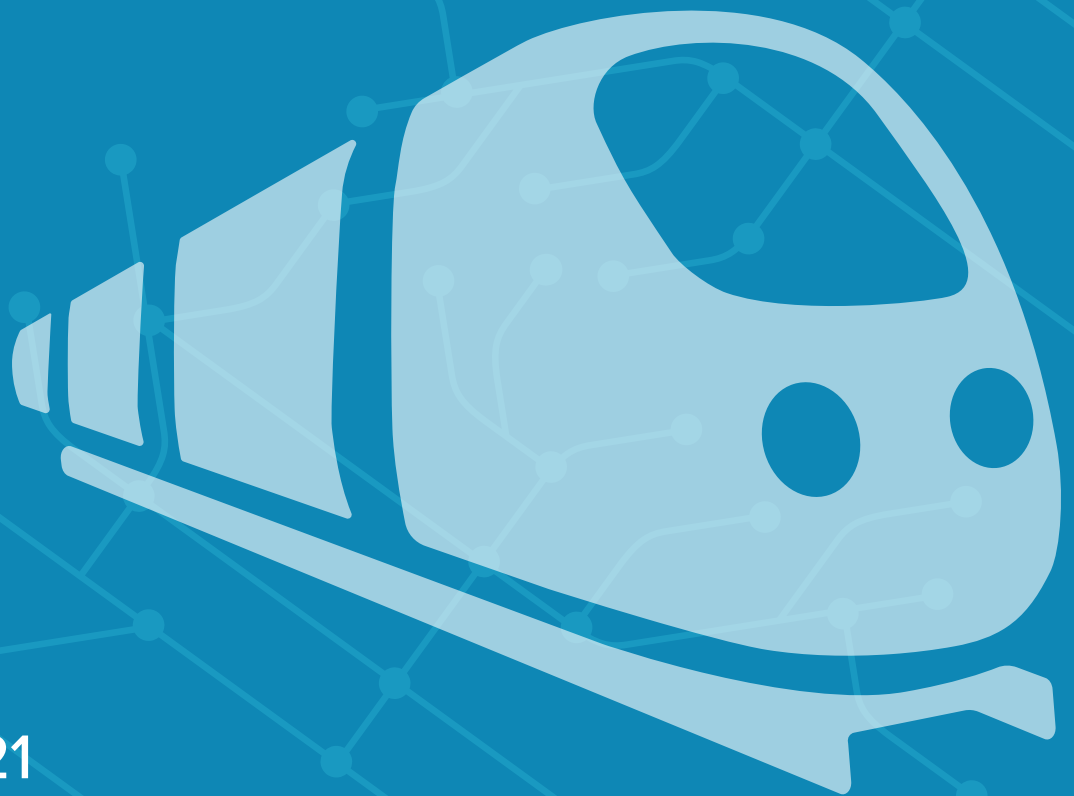
Next steps

- Briefing and engagement with Rossendale members
- Briefing and engagement with MPs along the route
- Wider engagement with key stakeholders including:
 - Members from neighbouring authorities
 - Transport for Greater Manchester
 - Greater Manchester Mayor
 - Building the case with the public through a sustained media campaign
 - East Lancashire Railway
- The role of the Steering Group
- Prepare a 'Restoring Your Railway' bid to enable a Strategic Outline Business Case to be undertaken (deadline **5th March 2021**)
- In parallel, seek funding from LCC, LEP and Govt for a £100k feasibility study i.e. approach Govt direct

Rossendale
BOROUGH COUNCIL

A BETTER CONNECTED LOCAL ECONOMY

MAKING THE CASE FOR
THE CITY VALLEY
RAIL LINK



SPRING 2021

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 strategic rationale for the development of a detailed business case. It outlines the indicative economic impact on business growth and job opportunities, and boost to the Lancashire visitor economy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We have spent time exploring the rationale for a new City Valley Link which will operate a combined rail-tram link running the 17 miles through Rossendale – through a Metrolink interchange in Bury - and onwards into Manchester Victoria. **Here we outline the case.**



9000 PEOPLE TRAVEL OUT OF ROSSENDALE INTO MANCHESTER EVERY DAY



14,000 TO REDUCE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF CURRENTLY 14,000 ROSSENDALE COMMUTERS

The purpose of this is to provide an outline concept in relation to this investment proposal.

A brief overview of the concept, an assessment of its viability, and the case for initial feasibility funding to develop the concept into a HM Treasury 'Green Book' compliant business case.

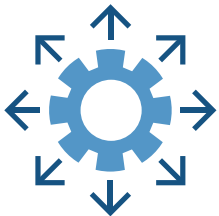
East Lancashire has a thriving economy ripe for further expansion as the local economy changes in the twenty-first century.

Rossendale 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.

Currently 9,000 people travel out of Rossendale into Manchester every day and this is growing. In a post Covid world the changing nature of working patterns strengthens the case for shortening commuting times, improving opportunities for Manchester based businesses to relocate to East Lancashire and reduce the carbon footprint of currently 14,000 commuters travelling out of Rossendale every day.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We have done much locally to grow the economy and are seeking a modest level of infrastructure support to make a step change in boosting the economy.



3,100 NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESSES

We estimate we can grow the local economy by at least 3,100 new jobs over the next 25 years by improving the rail infrastructure, opening up new opportunities for businesses in the Rossendale Valley Growth Corridor.

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

The visitor economy in Rossendale is currently underdeveloped and improvements in connectivity



VISITOR ECONOMY WITHIN EASY REACH

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.



ACCESS TO WORLD 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 CONCEPT

Our preferred option is for a combined train-tram service using the existing heritage line between Rawtenstall and a Metrolink interchange in Bury, which connects into Manchester Victoria. There are a number of potential solutions and we are keen to use feasibility funding to explore the specific cost benefit of each option.

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF THE CONCEPT ARE:

- An end-to-end journey time of under 1 hour for Rawtenstall – Manchester city centre, significantly outperforming the current peak time bus/car journey of up to 2 hours
- An hourly service during the day and evening with higher frequency at peak times to benefit commuters
- Greater levels of current service at weekends to improve access for day visitors to the Rossendale valley
- Convenient interchange with Metrolink services into Manchester at Bury
- Smart ticketing for a seamless point-to-point journey
- Infrastructure improvements at Rawtenstall and Buckley Wells stations
- Use of high quality Vivarail Class 230 rolling stock for a high quality travelling experience
- An option for a financially more sustainable future for the existing East Lancashire heritage railway



THE CONCEPT

Our preferred option is for a combined train-tram service using the existing heritage line between Rawtenstall and a Metrolink interchange in Bury



THE BENEFITS

We have reviewed the level of commuting pressure along the M66, demand for a new rail service, the current growth of the local economy and future opportunities to tackle regional inequality.

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
- 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
- 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 and Rawtenstall
- Reducing road congestion – a modest 10% share of commuter flow into Manchester would create 1 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 major tourist attraction

OUTLINE CONCEPT

The introduction of a heavy rail shuttle between Rawtenstall and Buckley Wells with interchange at Metrolink in Bury form the core of the proposal. This will provide a rail journey time between Rawtenstall and central Manchester of around 55-60 minutes. To improve the effectiveness of the interchange at Bury, real time information and smart ticketing with connecting tram services will be considered.

OUTLINE CONCEPT

Utilising an existing rail line between Rawtenstall and Bury significantly lessens the cost of the overall project. It requires no significant overhaul or laying of new track and utilises existing train stations at Rawtenstall and Buckley Wells.

TRACK

The proposal will utilise the existing Rawtenstall to Bury heavy rail track infrastructure. There would be operational independence from Metrolink, removing the risk of issues with existing infrastructure or operations transmitting performance problems onto the Metrolink network.

INTERCHANGE WITH METROLINK

A new interchange will be required on the Bury Metrolink line south of Bury Interchange to be constructed. This will provide high quality interchange with Bury – Manchester Metrolink services (and possibly Metrolink services to Heywood, Rochdale and Oldham if the existing tram–train proposal proceeds).

STATION IMPROVEMENTS

The proposal will require some improvements to stations and platforms along the route. This will focus on Rawtenstall, Buckley Wells and the Bury interchange.

There will be no wholesale rebuild, rather focused specific improvements to platforms, signage and ticketing facilities. The exact scale of these will be explored in the feasibility work

ROLLING STOCK

This approach offers attractive rolling stock options that pose fewer infrastructure challenges than a tram- train option. The trains will be designed to fit in with the existing heritage character of the railway, based on the Vivarail Class 230. The customer experience is equivalent to a new train. It has high acceleration (“agile train”) capability that will help minimise the need for infrastructure and signalling upgrades. A compatibility assessment would be undertaken during the feasibility study

TICKETING

We are keen there is a seamless point-to-point journey along the route. This is particularly important with a modal shift at Bury. The feasibility will explore the introduction of a smart ticketing approach.

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. To have a strong future the ELR will need to evolve. 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.

We are gearing up for a 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 have commissioned the respected independent body the Centre for Economics and Business Research to analyse the economic case for opening the new rail link. Their detailed evidence base provides a strong backing for the concept and we are keen to build on this through a detailed feasibility study.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The final cost of the infrastructure project will depend on the option chosen and the scale of improvement works required. At this point we are providing a realistic tested indicative projected cost, subject to further more detailed feasibility work.

Indicative capital costs for improvements to the line and station improvement will be in the region of £20m to £40m - equivalent to only an annual £9 to £18 per head of population in Rossendale over the next 30 years.

This includes:

- Upgraded Buckley Wells station based on a three platform interchange
- Upgraded Rawtenstall station to allow two trains to use it simultaneously
- Two new Park and Ride stations at Ewood Bridge and Stubbins, including some land acquisition at Stubbins
- Modest works to structures, track, fencing, level crossing upgrades, selective line speed upgrades and additional passing loops

We estimate annual operating costs in the region of £2.5m to £5m - a reasonable 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 based on 25 – 50 FTE staff ground and on-board staff

Viability work has identified that, using an average £5 fare per passenger, we estimate between 0.5m and 1m passengers are needed annually for the service to break even. 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.

Whilst we are providing an outline concept and indicative costing, it is essential that the proposal is based on a sound business case. We are seeking £100,000 of Government funding to develop the concept into a HM Treasury 'Green Book' compliant business case. Any additional costs associated with the feasibility work will be funded by the local authority partners supporting the project.



NEXT STEPS

We have provided the outline concept backed up by strong independent research. We are seeking **£100,000** of Government funding to develop the concept into a HM Treasury ‘Green Book’ compliant business case.

We will continue to explore existing funding streams including the Government’s Restoring Your Railway programme. However, we are keen to press the case for feasibility funding as a key part of East Lancashire’s economic recovery after Covid, as a major part of the areas’ attempts to translate the Government’s levelling up agenda into practical projects which deliver real sustained economic benefits.



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