

## WYCA connectivity infrastructure plan HADRAG's response

### Foreword and summary – our group and the context of this response

The Halifax & District Rail Action Group is a campaigning rail users' group centred on the routes through Halifax, Sowerby Bridge and Brighouse on the Calder Valley Line. We began in 1985 and campaigned for reopening of the lines through Elland and Brighouse, seeing success in 2000 with opening of Brighouse station, and we continue to argue for improvement. After a wait of more than twenty years, we are hopeful that Elland station will open in the next two years. In 2018, HADRAG along with three other user groups along the line launched the Electric Railway Charter to press the argument for a rolling programme of electrification, including the full Calder Valley route as recommended in the Northern Electrification Task Force report in March 2015: "Northern Sparks".

**After the Covid-19 pandemic**, we believe our railways must repurpose to flourish. We hope city life and travel will revive, but think there may be a permanent reduction in commuting and business travel. This should be seen as an opportunity not a threat. Public transport systems must meet a wider range of needs supporting leisure and personal travel demand. **The climate crisis** becomes ever more urgent; all transport must become zero-carbon. Modal transfer to rail will reduce congestion and pollution, improving individual human wellbeing and protecting the global environment. Modern, clean transport must be both "sociable" and popular.

#### Summary:

- Our priorities are improvements to the service on the Calder Valley Line, including decarbonisation through **electrification**, with benefits in the present decade.
- Services should be developed as **transport for wellbeing** serving a wider range of needs, not only city-based, but opening up new possibilities making rail and public transport more relevant to an ever-growing part of the population as we tackle the challenges of the local and global environment. We urge delivery without delay of the new station at Elland, and development of new services over existing routes – for example direct from East Lancs/Calderdale/Kirklees to York trains via Wakefield and Castleford.
- We strongly welcome the mass-transit proposals as a key aspect of a transport-for-wellbeing package extending to Halifax, Elland and Brighouse.
- If Northern Powerhouse Rail proceeds it must be directly positive for the communities through which it passes, with a genuinely central Bradford station and direct benefits for Calderdale.

*speaking out locally since 1985 for rail improvement  
for sociable, popular transport, supporting human and environmental wellbeing, and a railway serving the whole community*

## Background and summary – key points

We accept the need to reduce frequency over via Castlefield for the time being, and therefore give a qualified affirmative to questions 1 & 2. (We answer the consultation questions in Table 1, starting on page 5.)

However, this exercise must be an interim measure. The decision on a permanent solution based on enhanced infrastructure is urgent. Capacity enhancements were planned for Piccadilly and Oxford Road several years ago. Work on aspects of these, such as track changes to eliminate conflicts due to terminating services at Oxford Rd, would not rule out later more transformational enhancements. Alternative freight route proposals so Trafford Park trains can avoid Castlefield (as suggested to Network Rail by Railfuture) also must be prioritised.

**Completion of electrification** west of Manchester Victoria (McV) initially to Stalybridge (some initial clearance work was done on this more than 5 years ago) would enable a wider range of timetable options by allowing electric trains from the Bolton line to work through west of Manchester Victoria.

### Opportunity for a fair deal

This timetabling exercise must be fair on all routes across the NW and Yorkshire regions. It should an opportunity for stations that still await promised improvements.

**An hourly service from Bradford to Manchester Airport** was a commitment of the 2016 Northern franchise. An off-peak service from Leeds and Bradford via the Calder Valley line ran through to Oxford Road from Dec'2017 to May'18, billed as a “stepping-stone” to a service to the Airport. The service was withdrawn, a promise broken – even if dictated by circumstances. Nor was progress apparent on an aspiration to run the hourly Blackburn-Todmorden-Manchester trains through the Airport.

Should not local/near-regional travel in the North West and Yorkshire take precedence over longer distance flows? Is Manchester Airport really a key destination for travellers from Scotland? It seems to have been accepted that North-East England may not really need 2 trains/hr to Manchester Airport.

**There is a serious concern** that a new railway, the Ordsall Chord, built at public cost to link to Victoria and Castlefield routes through Manchester, is not being used for the 4 trains/hr (2TPE + 2CV) originally intended. We are forced to accept the reasons. The opportunity now must be to provide a reliable, punctual service that will attract passengers for a wide range of journey opportunities as rail travel rebuilds after Covid.

The opportunity must also now be taken to implement promised **Calder Valley (CV) line** service developments. We hope this will include better services for some of our local stations (for example Sowerby Bridge and Brighouse) as well as filling the connectivity gap between Bradford and south Manchester. ***The running of a regular Calder Valley service via the Ordsall Chord to access destinations served by Deansgate, Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations needs to be established as a principle:***

- Bradford is 12<sup>th</sup> largest UK city. The CV line Manchester to Bradford serves a population similar to that served by the Bolton line to Preston. See Table 2 (appended).
- Medium term, the aim must be 2 CV trains/hr via Ordsall and Castlefield – one serving Bradford, one from either Leeds via Brighouse or Blackburn via Burnley.
- **In the short term we ask for at least 1 train/hr connecting Bradford, Calderdale and Rochdale with south Manchester** giving access to work and education, leisure and arts attractions, and onward connections – Table 1, point 3.1.1. **It is disappointing that this is not proposed by any of the presented options.**
- As explained and explored further in Table 1 below, we favour a modified Option C. We suggest one of the 2/hr CV-Chester trains instead go to the Airport and that one of the TPE services at Victoria continue to Chester. There would be connections between these services at Victoria. See Figures 1 & 2 (p3-4).

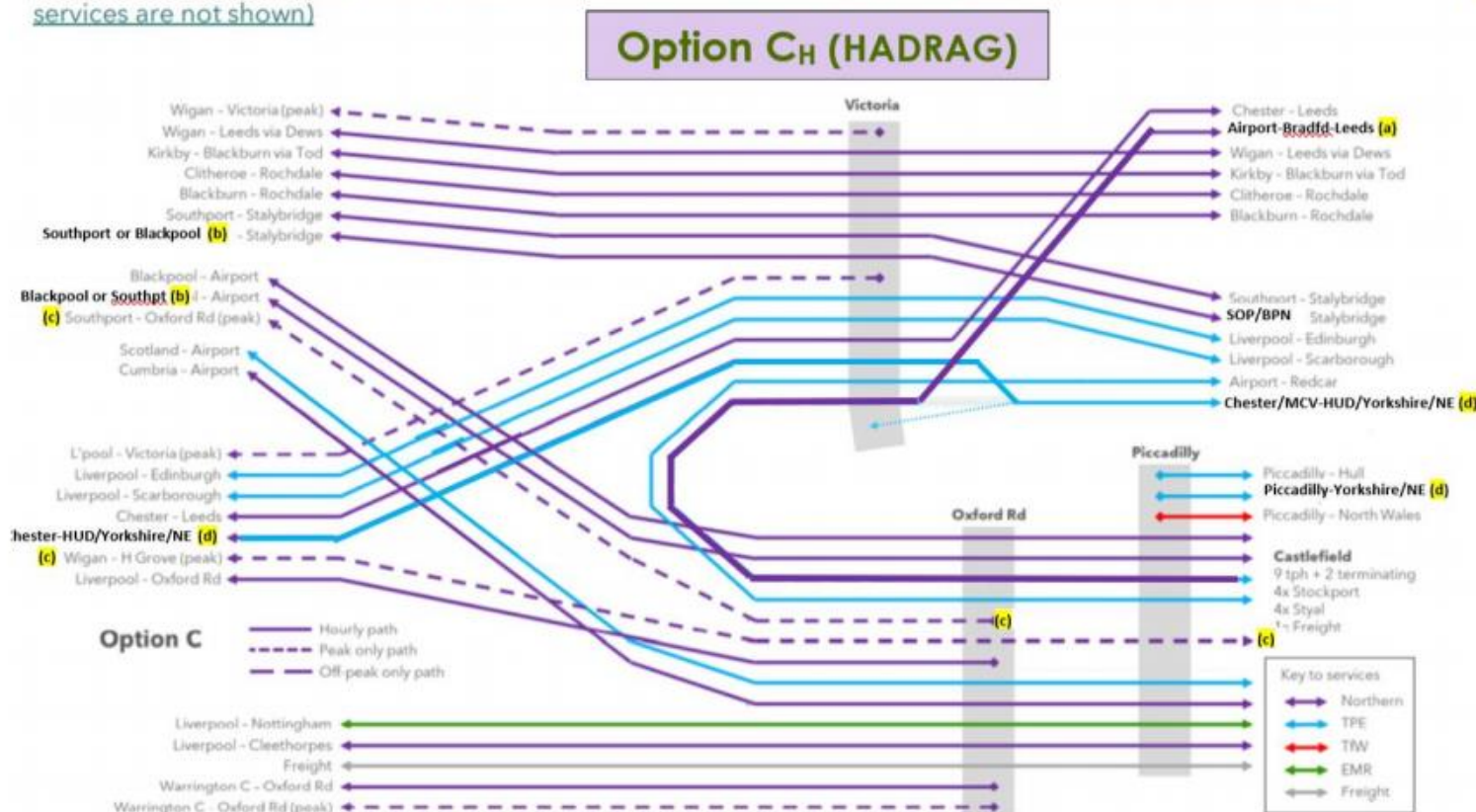
**Combatting climate change** should be highest priority. Rail will be essential and should offer a much wider range of journey purposes to rebuild and broaden the market after Covid. If we are to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, we do not want to promote air travel, but good through links to the airport will still needed. →

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Figure 1

Proposed service pattern in Manchester for Option C (note that south Manchester services are not shown)



Suggestions for a modified Option C

**Abbreviations** (including station codes), used in comments below and Table 1:

CV	Calder Valley (line)
TPE	TransPennine Express (TOC)
BPN	Blackpool (North)
CTR	Chester
DGT	Deansgate
HAZ	Hazel Grove
HUD	Huddersfield
MAN	Manc'r Piccadilly
MCO	Manc'r Oxford Rd
MCV	Manc'r Victoria
MIA	Manc'r Airport
SOP	Southport
SYB	Stalybridge

**(a)** Leeds-Bradford-MCV service each hour to Airport (MIA) (instead of Chester). Should be peak not just off-peak. Delivers franchise promise. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chester train could be TPE **(d)**.

**(b)** Could 2nd Blackpool train each hour go to Stalybridge instead of Airport releasing space for a Southport-MIA hourly service instead? We note this may be difficult unless MCV-SYB electrified. Potentially this could remove the need for the peak Southport-Oxford Rd train **(c)**, releasing Castlefield capacity.

**(c)** Are both peak hour extras from Wigan NW and from Southport necessary? Could both be replaced by a SOP-Hazel Grove releasing capacity on Castlefield, reducing conflict due to trains turning back at Oxford Road, and facilitating peak operation of **(a)**?

**(d)** TPE terminating at MCV could connect with CV MIA train **(a)**. TPE train could continue to Chester: this might be the Huddersfield stopper, restoring local connectivity to Ashton/MCV, with a different TPE going to Piccadilly via Guide Bg. (Longer term, a Chester-HUD service might extend to York via Wakefield.)

## Figure 2...

...shows how same-platform connections could work at Manchester Victoria (MCV), with 2 trains/hour via Ordsall chord and Castlefield:

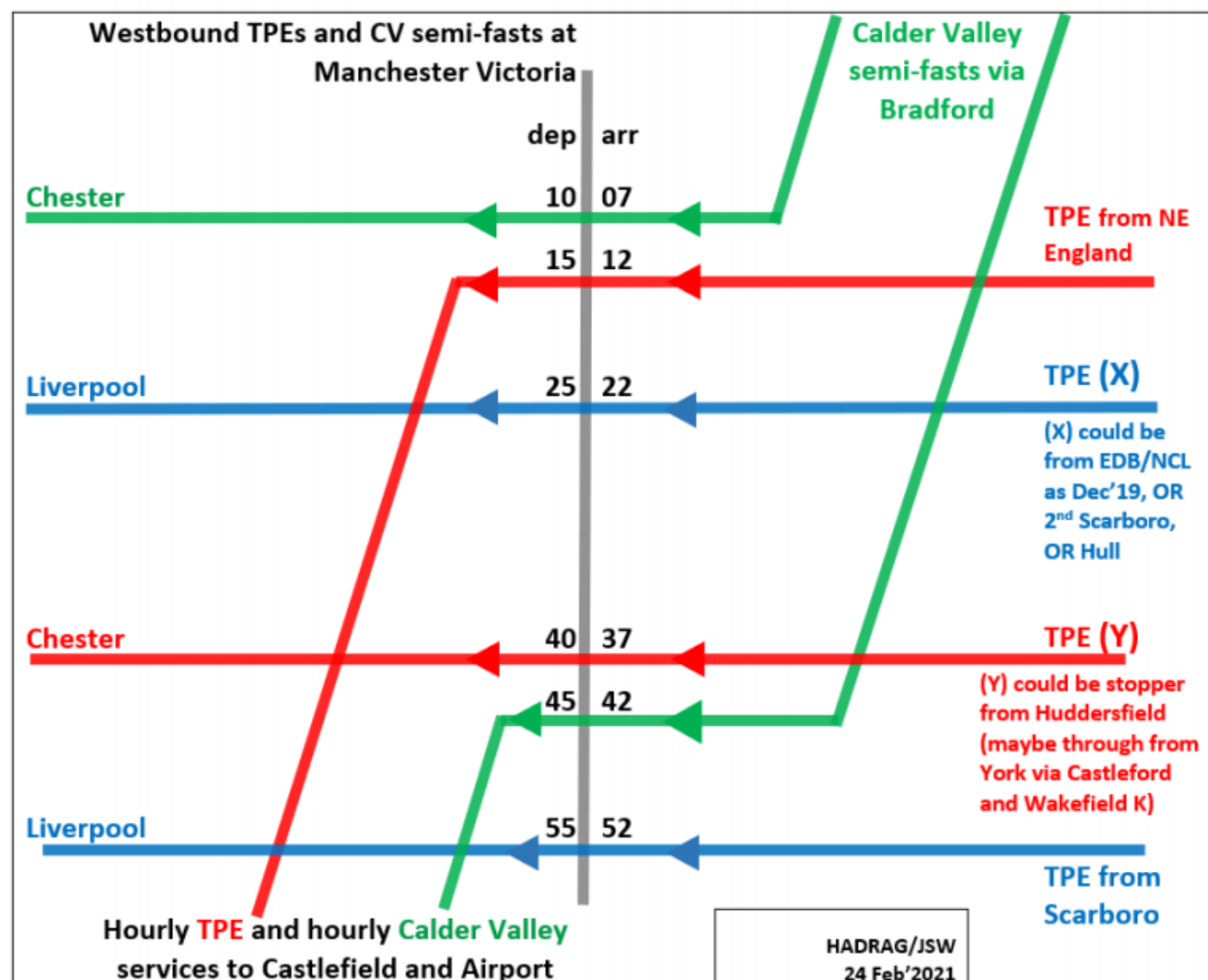
- **1/hr TPE – Airport**
  - **1/hr Calder Valley – Airport**
- and TPE trains going to Chester instead, on opposite half hour to CV train, i.e.
- **1/hr CV – Chester**  
(connecting with TPE – Airport)
  - **1/hr TPE – Chester**  
(connecting with CV – Airport)

Illustration shows westbound pattern. Assumed:

- all these services could use Platform 3 (P3) at MCV giving same-platform connections.
- timetable would be reversible with eastbound services using P4.

8-minute interchange times should be considered reasonable, even by UK standards, given that these are between trains following one after the other at the same platform.

Any TPE(Y) services terminating at MCV instead of going to Chester could use bay platforms P1/2.



**Table 1** Answers to consultation questions: suggestions for an improved solution

Question from consultation	Short answer	Suggestions and “tweaks” to improve/develop the proposals	Other significant concerns and ideas
<b>Question 1</b> <i>Do you support the aim of standardising and simplifying service patterns if this will significantly improve overall train performance?</i>	<p><b>1</b> YES, with some concerns.</p> <p>We accept that frequency over the Castlefield corridor needs to be reduced for the time being to improve reliability. If this results in a more standardised and predictable timetable that will be a benefit to passengers.</p> <p>However, this exercise must not be used to justify further delay to the provision of additional capacity.</p>	<p><b>1.1 (a) The changes need to treat different routes fairly and deliver earlier commitments.</b> Could the opportunity be taken to improve services on the <b>Calder Valley line</b> fulfilling past promises that have not yet been delivered?</p> <p>(b) The changes must be seen as interim pending infrastructure investment to increase capacity. Ideally, we should like to see the already planned scheme for Piccadilly P15&amp;16 plus Oxford Rd remodelling. But it is accepted we may now be waiting some years for a more ambitious long-term scheme. However, <b>we hope smaller measures may be possible in the nearer future</b> which might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional crossovers + signalling for centre turn-back at Manchester Oxford Road to remove conflicts caused by terminating trains from west.</li> <li>• Other small capacity improvements that could have significant benefits, e.g. improved layout around Manchester Victoria to enhance timetabling and performance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>1.2 No through service from Bradford, Calderdale and Rochdale to Oxford Road, Piccadilly or Airport.</b> This is a major gap obvious from the map (consultation document, p9). Bradford is 12<sup>th</sup> largest city in UK and 7<sup>th</sup> largest English district authority. In terms of population identified by local authority areas the CV line (Manchester-Bradford) serves a catchment (at least 974000 population) at least as great as the immediate catchment of the Manchester-Bolton-Preston line (919000).<sup>1</sup> Clearly the Bolton line also carries passengers from more distant origins, but even if our calculation under-estimates the population served, the high frequency of Preston-Airport trains is a remarkable contrast with the lack of any Bradford/CV-Airport trains.</p> <p>The Wigan/Southport line is also offered a poor deal, with no through trains in Option C via Castlefield other than at the peak.</p>

<sup>1</sup> See calculation based on local authority areas and references in **Table 2** (appended, page 11).



<p><b>Question 2</b> <i>Do you support the approach of measuring the service level and performance impacts across all passengers to allow fair trade-offs between options?</i></p>	<p><b>2 YES</b> – but see note in 2.1 →</p> <p>The table on page 20 of the consultation documents compares “like with like”, and gives a clear result in terms of the options. This result appears likely to be significant even allowing for considerable margins of error.</p>	<p><b>2.1 Note:</b> it is not clear to what extent alternative strategic service patterns have been considered, including examples such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand (at present suppressed) for service from Bradford, Calderdale and Rochdale to Deansgate, Oxford Rd, Piccadilly and Airport (MIA).</li> <li>• Justification for present hourly service from Scotland and other distant points to MIA (although point that NE England-MIA services have been reviewed is noted). Clearly long-distance services may import delays.</li> <li>• Possible alternative routes for a small number of through services across Manchester, for example from the North West through Victoria, Ashton Moss N Junction and Denton to Stockport. (See also 3.2 (b) below.)</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Question 3</b> <i>On the basis of these results, which is your preferred option?</i></p>	<p><b>3 Option C (modified)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– predicted to work best in terms of connectivity and performance</li> <li>– we should like to see “tweaks” to fill the Bradford/Calder Valley-Castlefield-MIA connectivity gap.</li> <li>– the Ordsall Chord should have at least 2 paths/hour all day and at least one of these should be a Calder Valley service via Bradford</li> </ul>	<p><b>3.1 Bradford and Calder Valley connectivity gap.</b> Please could the following adjustments to Option C be considered?</p> <p><b>3.1.1 Instead of 2 trains/hr Leeds-Bradford-CV-Chester (CTR) could one of these trains each hour go to Deansgate, Oxford Road, Piccadilly and probably Manchester Airport in order to deliver the former Northern franchise commitment?</b></p> <p><b>We propose</b> that the second hourly path MCV-CTR could be used by TPE running at least from HUD through to CTR. The service pattern (see Fig.2, p4) would thus, each hour, be:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">CV-Chester connecting into: TPE-Airport, and TPE-Chester connecting into CV-Airport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the very least this appears feasible at off-peak hours, with the CV train taking over the off-peak Ordsall Chord path allocated to TPE in Option C. ...</li> </ul>	<p><b>3.2 (a)</b> If a though service from Bradford to MCO/MAN/MIA <b>can not be provided</b> there is an argument that Option A would be reasonable for the CV line since it retains existing connectivity through MCV, with 2 TPE trains/hour connecting to MIA (though not at same platform). <b>However, Option C offers significantly greater overall benefits</b> including a better range of destinations from the CVL than either Option A or B</p> <p><b>(b) Denton line as alternative route across Manchester?</b> As mentioned in the note at 2.2, might it be possible to run one or two services per hour from north western points (say the Southport line) via Victoria, Ashton Moss North Junction, and Denton to Stockport and possibly beyond<sup>4</sup>? Potential benefits would be:</p>

<sup>4</sup> Though obviously not to the Airport.

	<p><b>...3 Option C (modified) continued...</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We ask whether a solution can be found for the above to operate all day, peak as well as off-peak.</b> Might the following be considered?             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Option C shows two peak-only paths covering overlapping corridors, Wigan NW-Hazel Grove (HAZ) and Southport-Oxford Rd. Could these be a single service Southport-Wigan Wallgate-MCO-HAZ? This would release capacity on the Castlefield corridor and could reduce the number of peak-hour trains turning back at MCO with clear operational benefits. See note (c) in Fig. 1 (page 3).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Please could the following also be considered:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A</b> Ideally the CV-MIA trains should call at Deansgate (for tram connections, conference centre, Bridgewater Hall, Castlefield attractions etc) as well as at MCO and Piccadilly.</li> <li><b>B</b> The TPE service from Newcastle could operate to Piccadilly instead of MCV, giving interchange at Picc for MIA, while the HUD stopper could run to MCV. This would restore Colne Valley and Tame Valley connectivity to Ashton which we know is desired by colleagues in the Stalybridge-Huddersfield user group.</li> <li><b>C</b> TPE running to Chester would improve connectivity Chester-West Yorkshire alongside the Chester-Leeds Northern service via CV. As an extension of the present Huddersfield “stopper”, the TPE Chester train could start back from Wakefield Kirkgate (as already proposed pre-pandemic by TPE) and/or, as a medium-term development, run through from York also serving Castleford.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>3.1.2 MAN-HUD-Bradford?</b> Whilst we hope the above will possible, HADRAG believes there is another possibility that might be considered, although it would conflict with suggestion B above.  <b>Could the hourly Manchester Piccadilly (terminus)-Huddersfield train be extended to Bradford serving Brighouse, Elland (new</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional cross-Manchester through-connectivity without requiring capacity on the Castlefield corridor;</li> <li>• availability of longer distance connections at Stockport;</li> <li>• opportunity to restore at least hourly service at Denton and Reddish South providing a useful link to MCV and beyond.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE, however, that local service frequency MCV-Ashton-Stalybridge would have to be maintained. It would not be acceptable to simply divert a MCV-Stalybridge service to Stockport.</b></p>
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	<p><b>... 3 Option C (modified) continued...</b></p>	<p><b>station planned to open by end of 2022), Halifax and Low Moor?</b> This would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• connect Bradford city and perhaps 70% of Calderdale district<sup>2</sup> with Manchester Piccadilly for the south side of the city, airport and onward connections.</li> <li>• meet potential demand for service from Tame/Colne valley<sup>3</sup> local stations to Calderdale and Bradford.</li> <li>• As noted above, this would, however, conflict with the desire of Huddersfield line station users – whom we respect – for their stoppers to serve Ashton and Victoria. So a better longer-term solution meeting both demands might be sought. (In the meantime, good connections should be provided at Stalybridge for Ashton passengers.)</li> </ul>	
		<p><b>3.1.3 Opportunity for CV timetable improvements.</b> If a major timetable recast is to take place, please could the opportunity be taken to implement the following improvements to present Calder Valley line service pattern? ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All CV Line trains (Blackpool-York and all Manchester trains) to serve Sowerby Bridge which has a catchment population equivalent to that of Todmorden and Hebden Bridge combined;</li> <li>• Better service for Mytholmroyd including Sunday service to Manchester;</li> <li>• Improvements to early-morning peak services at stations such as Brighouse, Sowerby Bridge and Mytholmroyd;</li> <li>• Re-timetabling to avoid conflict with freight which at present means several daily Leeds-Bradford-Manchester supposedly “fasts” have very noticeably extended journey times Bradford-MCV;</li> <li>• Restoration of daytime inter-peak service Littleborough area stations to Halifax and Bradford;</li> <li>• Improvements to late night services where there are long gaps at some local stations (Mytholmroyd, Sowerby Bridge);</li> <li>• Better Sunday services for both leisure and work; e.g. Leeds-Brighouse-Rochdale-Manchester to run Sundays;</li> <li>• Design of timetable to facilitate introduction of Elland station by end of 2022.</li> </ul>	

<sup>2</sup> By population estimated on basis of number of wards (at least 12 out of 17) served by Halifax, Elland and Brighouse stations.

<sup>3</sup> Stalybridge, Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite



<b>Question 4</b> <i>Please provide your views on the details of the proposed changes which are detailed by route in the Appendix.</i>	<b>Option A – no real improvement for CV line</b>	<p>Most akin to the present Calder Valley service. Could give connections to Castlefield/MIA. But:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 out of 4 CV Yorkshire trains would run to/from the Wigan (via Atherton) line, with limited apparent benefit for connectivity or performance (conflicts at Salford Crescent). One of these could be diverted to go to MIA via Castlefield (instead of one of the TPE services) but limitations of Option A would remain.</li> <li>We prefer a solution based on an adjusted Option C.</li> </ul>	See also 3.2 (above).
	<b>Option B – unattractive for CV line – limited connectivity and performance concerns</b>	<p>Connectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In this option all Yorkshire CV services that go beyond MCV go to the Atherton and Wigan line – least useful set of destinations for CV passengers compared with Chester, MIA or indeed Liverpool. ...</li> </ul> <p>Performance – We recognise that having the CV “fast”/semi-fast services terminating at MCV potentially improves performance. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>terminating at MCV is itself a performance risk.</b> The implication of the service pattern shown is that CV trains would use the MCV bay platforms (P1&amp;2), since the only other services from the east shown as terminating is the Newcastle TPE. CV trains would continue to conflict with trains routed via Stalybridge when crossing to enter/exit P1/2. CV line passengers have for many years been frustrated by delays arriving/departing at MCV due to late running for example by TPE. It seems likely that under Option B such frustration would continue.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Option C – best option</b>	<p>See 3.2 and 3.3 above. Key and additional points:</p> <p>Provides best connectivity across MCV for CV passengers compared with other options. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We emphasise that Chester is a less useful destination for CV passengers than south side of Manchester would be. But we would like to see at least 1/hr maintained. Might Liverpool be another alternative destination for CV trains? Priority should be Bradford-CV-Castlefield service.</li> <li>The Chester-CV-Leeds service was introduced to maintain connectivity when TPE vacated the Warrington Bank Quay corridor. If there are to be two hourly trains Chester-MCV would it be better if one ran via CV, the other via Huddersfield?</li> </ul> <p>Proposed Blackburn-Todmorden-Kirkby via MCV offers interchange with Merseyrail services at Kirkby and is a better service for Kirkby than Dec’2019.</p> <p>With our proposed modification the Calder Valley line pattern at Manchester Victoria would be as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1 train per hour from Leeds to Chester via Bradford, Manchester Victoria and Warrington Bank Quay.</b></li> <li><b>1 train per hour from Leeds to Manchester Airport via Bradford, Manchester Victoria and Castlefield</b></li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 train per hour from Leeds to Wigan via Dewsbury, Manchester Victoria and Atherton.</li> <li>• 1 train per hour from Blackburn to Kirkby via Manchester Victoria and Atherton.</li> <li>• 2 trains per hour from Rochdale to Blackburn / Clitheroe via Manchester Victoria and Bolton.</li> </ul>
<p>All options – the service descriptions in the appendix understandably do not give full details of stopping patterns.</p> <p>We reassert the view that the opportunity must be taken to improve the timetable for Calder Valley line stations including Brighouse, Sowerby Bridge and Mytholmroyd. See <b>3.1.3</b> above.</p>		
<p><b>Questions 5-7</b></p> <p><i>Where do you usually travel from and to? Please include your origin and destination station. How often do you make this journey? What is the reason for your journey? For example, work, business, education, leisure.</i></p>	<p><b>5</b> Our members and friends have a wide range of journeys from Calderdale stations to a wide radius of destinations around Leeds, Manchester across the North.</p> <p><b>6</b> Our members and friends travel at various times, some daily some less frequently.</p> <p><b>7</b> Our members and friends travel for work, business, education, voluntary work, leisure, culture and the arts.</p>	<p>There are commuters on the Calder Valley who, at least in normal times, travel to the south side of Manchester city regularly and would benefit from a service from Bradford and intermediate stations to Deansgate, Oxford Road and Piccadilly.</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>	<p>We hope the opportunity of these changes will be taken to improve the service on the Calder Valley line, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a regular all-day service from the city of Bradford and from Calderdale and Rochdale districts to stations on the Castlefield route through Manchester, Manchester Piccadilly and the Airport (3.1.1 above);</li> <li>• To improve other aspects of the Calder Valley Line timetable (3.1.3 above)</li> </ul> <p>We believe this can be done whilst maintaining connectivity and reliability on other routes.</p>	

## Appendix:

Table 2 – population calculations – CV and Bolton lines compared.

Source <a href="#">List of English districts by population - Wikipedia</a> (From "Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, Mid-2019". Office for National Statistics. 6 May 2020.) Bradford city UK ranking from <a href="#">100 Largest Cities and Towns in the UK by Population   The Geographist</a>								
Local (district) authority (LA) served	District authority population	Population ranking				Trains/hour to/from Manchester Oxford Rd, Piccadilly (majority to Airport)		
		UK cities	England			Dec'2019	Option C as shown in consultation document	Option C <sub>H</sub> (HADRAG suggestion)
Bradford	539,776	12 <sup>th</sup> (defined as city not LA)	7 <sup>th</sup> (as LA)	Calder Valley Line to Bradford	973,643	0	0	1
Calderdale (including Halifax)	211,455		86th			0	0	1
Rochdale	222,412		79th			0*	0*	1
Oldham (served by Mills Hill)	237,110		76th	CVL + Oldham	1,210,753	0*	0*	1
Salford	258,834		66th	Bolton line to Preston	918,523	3	3 (assumed Scotland trains not to call Salford Crescent)	
Bolton	287,550		48th			3 or 4	4	4
Preston	143,135		149th			4 (inc. 1 via Wigan NW)	4	3-4
Chorley	118,216		198th			3	4	3-4
South Ribble (served by Preston stn)	110,788		215th			As Preston	As Preston	
						* Rochdale and Oldham district are also served by trams to Deansgate, but not direct to Airport. Journey times by tram are generally significantly longer than by potential direct train from Rochdale		