ELLERMAN

DRIVEN BY SERVICE, KNOWLEDGE AND PRIDE

**Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit (TIPU)**
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

1st December 2025

To whom it may concern,

**Letter of support – Network Rail Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth) Enhancements Order**

On behalf of Ellerman City Liners I am writing to offer our strong support for the Network Rail Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) for the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth).

As a freight user operating across the North of England and serving countless Blue Chip companies we recognise the TRU as a transformational long-awaited investment in one of the North's most strategically important rail corridors. The scheme will deliver the modern high-performing infrastructure needed to improve reliability, support future growth in rail freight and strengthen the region's economic competitiveness.

The upgrade enhancements including gauge clearance to W12 to enable the movement of intermodal containers between the key ports and rail freight interchanges in the North East, Yorkshire & Humberside and the North West, full electrification, modern signalling, higher line speeds, provision for longer trains, expanded sidings and additional capacity is vital to unlocking modal shift from road to rail and support the UK's wider decarbonisation goals. Importantly, the works between Stalybridge and Diggle address long-standing constraints that have limited both freight and passenger operations for decades.

For too long the Transpennine corridor has operated on ageing infrastructure not designed for today's mixed traffic demands, especially intermodal rail freight. Intermodal traffic is delivering some of the highest growth opportunities for UK rail freight today and will be a significant contributor to achieving the Government's 75% rail freight growth target by 2050.

The Transpennine corridor will open a viable East – West axis to meet the needs of intermodal freight moving between the industrial centres of the north of the UK and mainland Europe, via the East Coast's important short-sea ports. Congestion, low capability routes and uncertain investment timelines have hampered journey times, restricted freight paths and created challenges for businesses like ours seeking reliable, resilient connections across the North. The clarity and ambition now being shown through TRU marks a turning point.

The TRU upgrade, and this order will unlock new growth opportunities by enabling commercially and operationally viable rail freight services to be developed. It will provide confidence in future business decisions to invest private capital by rail freight operators and supply chain customers

into assets and other enabling infrastructure, including rail freight interchanges, which will support meeting our sustainability objectives.

We therefore strongly welcome the order and in particular:

- The focus on resolving freight capacity constraints between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth) and the demonstrable progress delivered by TRU and Network Rail have already made in this area.
- The programme's commitment to full electrification, higher speeds, modern signalling and increased line speeds, enabling growth in existing and emerging markets.
- Planned interventions such as W12 gauge clearance, grade separation and improved layouts at key junctions and stations that will remove operational bottlenecks and support more efficient, sustainable operations.

Ellerman City Liners also recognises the need for alignment with future infrastructure investment programmes that will effectively integrate the Transpennine corridor into the wider national network and provide the capacity, flexibility and capability for rail freight to meet evolving market demands, maximise long-term benefits and secure the seamless, sustainable freight paths necessary to deliver the Government's rail freight growth target.

We urge the timely approval of this TWAO, and from our perspective we can see how these upgrades represent a catalyst for future economic growth, increased productivity, enhanced freight performance and improved access for our staff, customers and the communities we serve.

Please feel free to contact Dan Foley should you wish to discuss this letter or our freight ambitions in greater detail.

Your sincerely,

Dan Foley

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