



Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit (TIPU)

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

11 November 2025

To whom it may concern,

RE: Letter of support – Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) submission for the Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth)

Manchester Airport welcomes the opportunity to express our support for the Transport and Works Act Order submission for the section from Stalybridge to Diggle (Saddleworth).

We recognise the benefits that this scheme will bring in strengthening rail connectivity across the North, including faster and more reliable services between Manchester and other major Northern cities such as Leeds, York, and Huddersfield. The Transpennine route currently handles a mix of fast express, local stopping, and freight services, but it has not seen significant infrastructure investment for many years. As a result, the route is increasingly congested, with limited capacity to accommodate future growth.

Support for the Order scheme, as part of the wider TRU programme, will address these challenges, enabling more services, faster and more reliable journey times, and greater resilience for both passenger and freight traffic. Improved connectivity is imperative to the future economic growth of the North and will help narrow the economic and productivity gap with London and the South East, while supporting the efficient movement of goods and people across the region.

Manchester Airport is proud to connect the North with the world, helping people visit new places, linking businesses with key global markets, and welcoming tourists and investors to our region. We are one of Europe's fastest-growing airports, serving more than 31m passengers annually.



In partnership with over 50 airlines, Manchester Airport currently services over 200 destinations, including Beijing, Mumbai, Singapore, Hong Kong, New York, Atlanta and direct links across the Middle East.

As the North's only long-haul gateway with direct routes to global economic powerhouses such as China, North America, India and the Middle East, we welcome the opportunity to explore how we can provide regular, reliable, and sustainable access to Manchester Airport from major towns and cities across the North.

Our recent £1.3 billion investment to transform Terminal 2 and unlock the capacity of our runways will enable us to significantly grow passenger numbers and continue to contribute to the Northern economy. A recent report from Arup highlighted that Manchester Airport has the potential to nearly double in size to more than 60 million passengers annually and almost double its economic contribution to the Northern economy to some £16bn annually. Enhanced rail connectivity is a key part of unlocking this growth.

We are supportive of the Transpennine Route Upgrade as it seeks to deliver investment in rail infrastructure connecting Manchester to York via Leeds and Huddersfield. The improvements will be valuable in providing a more affordable, reliable, and frequent rail connection to key Northern destinations providing a compelling and attractive alternative for passengers travelling to and from Manchester Airport.

Whilst there are direct train services from Manchester Airport to Leeds, there remain opportunities to improve reliability, increase speeds, and provide more frequent services. We would also welcome the chance to strengthen direct links to Huddersfield and York, as well as explore enhanced connectivity to Bradford.

It is essential that the delivery of the TRU scheme is coordinated with future transport initiatives, including Northern Powerhouse Rail, and integrated into wider regional networks such as the Bee Network. A coordinated approach will maximise connectivity, improve efficiency, and ensure that communities and businesses across the region can fully benefit from the investment.

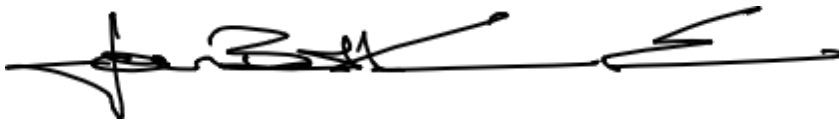
Over the past twelve months, Manchester Airport has seen a very welcome increase in passenger use of rail services. Our most recent sustainable mode share survey recorded that around 18% of passengers now travel to and from the airport by public transport. Looking ahead, we are targeting a substantial increase in the proportion of passengers using sustainable modes, particularly rail. We are committed to providing real and attractive travel options for our passengers and are keen to collaborate with transport operators to achieve this ambition.

We are looking forward to the outcome of the TWAO and are confident that with collective working and wider support, there will be a favourable outcome. From our perspective, we can see the real benefits of this additional connectivity to our airport.

Please feel free to contact Pam McGuinness, Manchester Airport's Surface Access Strategy Manager, should you need to discuss this letter and our connectivity ambitions in greater detail. We would also be happy to provide any further supporting material if this would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Bottomley", written over a horizontal line.

Jon Bottomley
Planning Services Director
Manchester Airport Group