10 December 2025

Rt. Hon. Heidi Alexander MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Transport Infrastructure Planning Unit (TIPU)
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

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Sent by e-mail.

cc. Lord Hendy, Minister for Rail
Cllr Louise Gittins, Interim Chair TfN

Dear Secretary of State,

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

I am writing on behalf of Transport for the North (TfN) in support of the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) for the works at Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth).

Our vision is of a thriving North of England, where world-class transport supports sustainable economic growth, excellent quality of life, and improved opportunities for all. This requires a more reliable, resilient, and sustainable transport network that enables inclusive growth that is sustainable for the longer term. The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) programme is central to achieving that mission, being a key first step to transform east-west connectivity across the North.

The Government's investment in TRU is more than just an infrastructure scheme – it's a catalyst for transformative growth. By improving connectivity for people and businesses, it will unlock opportunities for economic growth that will result in wider benefits beyond the transport sector being realised.

TfN's work to support the business case demonstrates that the impact of investment in TRU extends right across the North. It will directly improve journey times, capacity, and performance of passenger services serving the North's great cities and towns including Liverpool, Scarborough, Hull, Middlesbrough, Darlington, Durham, Newcastle, and Manchester Airport.

The proposed upgrades between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth) are essential to resolving long-standing bottlenecks on the route. Without this investment, the overall benefit of the TRU programme will be substantially reduced. The work to deliver electrification, W12 gauge clearance, grade separation and improved layouts at key junctions and stations, as well as modern signalling and line speed improvements, is necessary to unlock the benefits of investment to date in TRU by delivering faster, more frequent, and more reliable services for both passengers and freight.

The proposed interventions at Mossley and Greenfield stations will greatly improve accessibility for local communities, support economic participation and increase social inclusion by enhancing access to jobs and services across Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, and beyond. Where there is investment in stations as part of the overall TRU programme, it is essential that the investment delivers an accessible station.

The enhanced provision for rail freight realised by track lowering works at Stalybridge and Scout Tunnels will help unlock the key role the Transpennine corridor has as a freight and logistics corridor.

Failure to deliver this investment would result in a gap in the delivery of a Transpennine high gauge cleared network, necessary to support modal shift of goods from road to rail, particularly intermodal container traffic. Consequential wider investment in gauge clearance and capacity for freight and logistic services across the rail network will help to reduce congestion on the strategic road network, including the M62. It would also help reduce carbon emissions, strengthen the resilience of supply chains, and improve access to Northern ports, manufacturing hubs, and distribution centres.

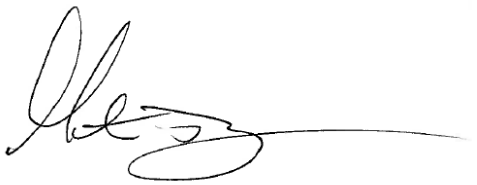
Approval for the TWAO will give confidence to private sector investors seeking to invest across the North in locations served by services using the improved Transpennine corridor. It will also allow other major programmes, such as the Bee Network and the Leeds Mass Transit scheme, to align their proposals with work being delivered through the TRU programme.

Any delay to the TWAO risks holding back economic growth and will delay the realisation of benefits for communities and businesses across the North.

We expect the programme to continue to work closely with local partners and stakeholders to resolve any local concerns arising from the proposals in the TWAO, including accessibility during construction especially where there are existing rights of way.

In summary, we fully support the TRU programme, and specifically the application for a Transport and Works Act Order for the works at Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth), recognising it as a key element of the overall programme which will strengthen connectivity and unlock long-term economic growth across the North.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Tugwell
Chief Executive, Transport for the North