

£3.9 billion injection into the Transpennine Route Upgrade

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The government says one of Britain's largest rail projects is on track to deliver better journeys, more quickly for passengers and freight in the North thanks to a £3.9 billion funding boost announced by Rail Minister Huw Merriman.

Work on the Transpennine Route Upgrade will be accelerated through the cash injection, leading to quicker journey times, reduced carbon emissions and more reliable services between key northern cities.

Once complete, the full route aims to offer significantly improved services on the route between Manchester-Huddersfield-Leeds-York with rail users benefiting from a fully-electrified line, accessible stations and more frequent services.

With work already well underway on the project, the latest announcement means government has invested a total of £6.9 billion into the upgrade, with the initial £3 billion funding work to deliver early benefits by the middle of the decade, such as the electrification of tracks.

Further funding will be confirmed by the Department as the project progresses to support the overall cost of up to £11.5 billion.

The project also underpins the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), which the government recently strengthened its support for by pledging a further £12 billion into its delivery to better connect Liverpool and Manchester.

On top of this, it is bringing in Bradford and Hull into the NPR scheme, using savings from its cancelling of phase 2 of HS2. The new Bradford station will support regeneration efforts in the UK's seventh-largest city and facilitate a new rail connection to Manchester via Huddersfield – almost halving journey times while enabling us to double the frequency of services and double the capacity with up to an extra 1,000 seats per hour.

As part of the Department's commitment to working with local leaders on the successful delivery of both these schemes, the Rail Minister will also host a roundtable in Manchester today (Monday). He will hear views from stakeholders and businesses to ensure the country's transport schemes in the Midlands and North benefit the communities they serve.

Rail Minister Huw Merriman said: "The Transpennine Route Upgrade represents the first major step in delivering transformed east-west connectivity in the north and I'm delighted to announce this multi-billion-pound funding boost to move to the next stage of delivery.

"Today's announcement demonstrates this Government's commitment to delivering its Network North plan which will improve journeys, help to level up regions and grow the economy."

The funding announced today will be invested in doubling the number of tracks from two to four between Huddersfield and Ravensthorpe, allowing faster trains to overtake slower stopping services and freight journeys.

Once complete in the mid-2030s, the upgrade will offer up to eight trains per hour, hundreds of extra seats and cut journey times between Manchester and York by ten minutes.

The investment will also support digital signalling along the route to allow trains to run closer together, leading to more frequent and reliable services.

It will support TransPennine Express in engaging with manufacturers on options for up to 29 new trains to replace the existing diesel fleet, in addition to new trains for local stopping services operated by Northern, ensuring trains along the line are suited to the modernised tracks.

Neil Holm, Managing Director for the Transpennine Route Upgrade, said: "Transpennine Route Upgrade is well underway with building the infrastructure that bring passengers more frequent, faster, greener trains, that run on a better, cleaner and more reliable railway for generations to come."

"This commitment by the government to our programme allows us to move two of our largest projects from design into construction and delivery. It brings us one big step closer to delivering the future of rail travel in the North of England."

The regional economy will also benefit from the project, with thousands of jobs and apprentice roles

created, carbon emissions reduced by 108,000 tonnes a year and up to 15 extra freight trains able to travel per day – taking more lorries off the road and delivering people's goods quicker.

Darren Oldham, Transport for the North's Director of Rail and Road said: "This is a major milestone for the TRU project as it upgrades a key rail corridor across the North, bringing improvements for passengers and extra capacity for freight. TfN has been working with partners for some years to bring forward these benefits, which will lay the foundations for further transformational development from Northern Powerhouse Rail.

"We fully welcome the investment in this corridor as it will improve journey times, reliability, capability and capacity between Manchester and York via Huddersfield and Leeds. It will also reduce the pressure on the road network, particularly the M62 between West Yorkshire and Manchester."

Responding to the news, Railway Industry Association Chief Executive Darren Caplan said: "Today's restatement of previously announced funding for the Transpennine Route Upgrade is a welcome confirmation that the programme will continue to progress.

"However, as far as we understand this is not new money for rail and is not a new pipeline opportunity for rail suppliers. As the Government itself would say, TRU has been under development for more than a decade and is a key component of the 2021 Integrated Rail Plan for the North & Midlands and the Network North plan announced in October this year.

"The Railway Industry Association and our members now await the next business case update for TRU, as well as certainty on a rolling stock strategy for the project, enhanced governance arrangements and review of the impact of inflation on costs. We look forward to hearing from the Government on this in due course."

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