

Lakes Line railway improvement plans

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Cumbria County Council has submitted a bid to government for expanding capacity on the Lakes Line between Oxenholme and Windermere.

The County Council has produced a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for developing the railway branch line, to be considered as part of the Department for Transport's Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline. This sets out a rolling programme of investment for enhancement of the country's rail network.

The case sets out the reason for the construction of a dynamic passing loop located running west from Burneside, as well as line speed and level crossing improvements, modernising signalling and a second platform at Burneside. The dynamic passing loop would be several times the length of the trains using the line, enabling them to pass each other without having to slow down.

The Lakes Line is currently single track, which means just one round trip per hour is possible. This limits its ability to support the visitor economy and restricts local community access via rail to health, education and other key services.

Improvements to the line could double the number of services able to run hourly on the line. This would provide improved transport links for local residents and better opportunities for sustainable travel for

visitors to the Lake District National Park. They would also deliver economic growth and environmental benefits by decarbonising train services.

Councillor Keith Little, Cumbria County Council Cabinet member for Transport, said: “The County Council are submitting this Strategic Outline Case to the DfT in order to secure Government support for developing this exciting proposal as part of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.

“We believe creating a dynamic passing loop as part of a major investment in the Lakes Line would be hugely beneficial and help deliver a rural transport exemplar which better meets the needs of our residents, visitors and businesses. It would support our visitor economy and its green recovery by providing more sustainable travel to the Lake District and help more people to access services and jobs. “

The SOC says a package of enhancements for the Lakes Line corridor could potentially boost capacity by nearly 50 per cent, adding up to 225,000 trips to the existing 550,000 trips a year on the railway.

If supported by the government, proposals would be subject to further development and design allowing a decision to be made on whether to deliver the upgrade.

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