

# Manchester Mayor calls for NPR to take priority over HS2

February 10, 2020



The Mayor of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority has called for the Government to prioritise the building the Northern Powerhouse Rail before HS2.

Andy Burnham has set out what he calls 'a possible solution to the HS2 riddle'.

It comes as it's reported the decision into the first phase of HS2 is expected this week.

His four-point plan is:

- Expedite the construction of Northern Powerhouse Rail by reassigning the HS2 team in the North to work alongside Transport for the North. This could deliver benefits for rail passengers in the North in the 2030s rather than having to wait until the 2040s.
- Build the full NPR network – connecting Liverpool, Manchester Airport, Manchester Piccadilly, Bradford and Leeds.
- Build a new, modern, underground station at Manchester Piccadilly on an east / west alignment – to ensure our rail system is future-proofed for generations to come.
- Once NPR is complete, continue building HS2 south from Manchester, utilising the shared infrastructure between Manchester Airport and Piccadilly.

He said: “First of all, Greater Manchester continues to support building both HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail all the way and in full. We need the right north south and east west connections for the North West, Yorkshire and the North East. London has never had to choose between rail projects. Why should we?”

“Whilst we are not opposed to making cost savings to HS2, what we won’t support is making all of those savings in the North. We cannot support a situation where the Government builds a high-spec rail link between London and Birmingham, and a lesser-class rail link between the Midlands and the North.

“When making his decision on HS2, the Prime Minister should remember that we are no longer just building a north to south railway, but an east to west one too.

“Herein lies the problem. Because HS2 has been designed as a north to south terminus station at Piccadilly Station, what’s on the table simply isn’t the right solution for the vital east-west connections across the north.

“This is why despite supporting HS2 we have had longstanding concerns with the plans for Manchester Piccadilly. It risks creating the mistakes of the past – where our infrastructure is simply unable to cope with the growth in demand.

“It cannot be right that such critical connections and capacity will be hampered by bolting on NPR to HS2 infrastructure. This will mean second class east to west services, and a second-class station at Manchester Piccadilly. The right solution for Piccadilly is the right solution for the whole of the North. A recent report commissioned by Manchester City Council by experts at Bechtel shows that this can be done by a shorter tunnel from Manchester Airport to central Manchester, releases much needed investment to design the kind of station we need Piccadilly to be.”

Commenting on the impact the four-point plan would have, Mr Burnham said: “This could bring fast, modern rail links to the Northwell ahead of the HS2 timetable. That would reduce journey times between these cities by an average of 30-45 minutes, and it would transform rail connections to Manchester Airport for millions of people and thousands of businesses.

“Crucially it would take traffic off our roads, supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy.

“Our current rail system was designed and built by the Victorians. The decisions we make now as a country will affect us for the next 150 years. Let’s do it once and do it right.”

Photo credit: GMCA