

RIA welcomes Transpennine Route Upgrade announcement

July 21, 2022



RIA has said the announcement of an increase in the investment to complete the TransPennine route upgrade (TRU) is very welcome, providing certainty for the suppliers working on this project and increasing capacity, speed and reliability for future passengers and freight users.

Particularly welcome is the inclusion of full electrification and digital signalling as these technologies are essential for a modern, future proofed, and zero-carbon railway. RIA have been calling for a strategy to deploy both electrification and digital signalling on intensively used railways throughout the UK to realise the benefits of decarbonisation, reliability and lower whole life costs, that the government have recognised for the TransPennine route.

An independent assessment by Oxford Economics, undertaken for RIA, shows that for every £1 spent on rail infrastructure, £2.80 of economic benefit is generated during construction. So the release of a further £1 billion of investment of the £9 billion programme will generate £2.8 billion of immediate economic benefit in addition to the benefits the government will be assuming for the completed project.

RIA also welcomes the National Audit Office report on the TransPennine project published on the same day

as the announcement of increased investment. This important report confirms that government has developed a clear investment case, provided certainty over the programme and scope and put in place appropriate governance and contracting structures. Importantly the programme is now being staged to provide progressive improvements to passengers. However the report also highlights some important lessons that need to be taken on board. These include the fact that it has taken too long for government to decide how to upgrade the route and this has led to abortive cost. RIA support the cross-industry Rail SPEED initiative which should help accelerate decision making in future projects.

Whilst this announcement clarifies the funding for TRU, it makes it even more important that the government publish the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP). This is because TRU was previously the largest project in RNEP and with the increase in investment for TRU it is important for industry to understand the status of other projects.

Justin Moss, Chair of RIA North, said “It is very positive to see the release of additional funding for TransPennine Route Upgrade being confirmed. This will allow site work on this complex project to progress the track, signalling and electrification work that we have been designing to deliver much needed passenger and freight benefits and huge economic benefits for the whole region.

“These economic benefits will start during construction with the project securing work for thousands of skilled people in the north’s rail supply chain and creating new jobs and opportunities for apprentices. I am sure the whole of the supply chain in the north will join me in welcoming this opportunity to show what we can deliver for rail customers, the taxpayer and the wider economy.”