

Work begins on £100 million Metro Flow project

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Work has commenced on a £100 million track dualling scheme on the Tyne and Wear Metro.

The ambition behind the project is to increase service frequency, reduce journey times, and improve reliability.

Known as the Metro Flow Project, it will see an existing freight line upgraded and electrified in South Tyneside, making it capable of carrying Metro services and boosting capacity by an extra 24,000 customer journeys every day.

Nexus, the public body that owns and manages Metro, joined local council leaders and contractor Buckingham Group Contracting Ltd to cut the first piece of turf – marking the official start of works on site.

The scheme cost £103 million, £95 million of which was funded by the UK Government's Transforming Cities Fund.

Three sections of single track will be dualled between Pelaw and Bede Metro stations, with the most

intensive period of track works taking place between September and December during a 12-week line closure.

Nexus says the benefits of the Metro Flow project include:

- Increasing the frequency of Metro trains to one every 10 minutes outside central areas
- Improved reliability and quicker recovery from major disruptions
- Better support for major events including the Great North Run, Sunderland International Airshow, stadium concerts, and major sporting events
- The opportunity for further Metro expansion

Cllr Tracey Dixon, leader of South Tyneside Council, said: “We’re absolutely delighted to see this much-anticipated project get underway.

“Metro Flow will deliver huge benefits for South Tyneside and for the wider region; it will increase capacity, frequency and efficiency on the system. A safe, reliable and efficient public transport network is vital to boost economic growth, and to link our residents and businesses to job, education and social opportunities.

“It will also promote sustainable transport and support our move towards a cleaner, greener borough.”

Chief operating officer at Nexus, Martin Kearney, said: “The Metro Flow project is going to be transformative for the Tyne and Wear Metro. It’s great to be able to mark the official start on site for these extensive track dualling works.

“When the project is completed at the end of the year, the dualled track will allow us to increase the frequency of Metro services system-wide from twelve minutes to ten minutes outside of the central areas. This means more regular services and faster journey times for our customers.

“This also gives us the scope to examine future opportunities to expand the network to other areas that are currently not served by Metro.”

Rob Harwood, construction director for Buckingham, said: “Buckingham was delighted last year to be awarded the exciting and challenging Metro Flow project. Bringing forward the experience from working successfully with Nexus on the Howdon depot project, we are confident it will be a great success.

“The key challenge lies in achieving the programme, which has no room to change as everything has to be ready for a blockade, that cannot be moved, straight after the Great North Run in Sept 2022. We then have three months to undertake the main construction works.

“The project team is now being assembled and is based in temporary site offices. I’m pleased to say the team embraces many local people within it, further benefitting the local community.

“Lastly, and equally importantly, we have, with Nexus, started work within the community including engaging with local schools; Jarrow School and Bill Quay Primary.”

The funding for the Metro Flow project has allowed Nexus to buy four more new trains on top of the 42 which have already been ordered.

For further information, there will be two public drop-in sessions hosted by Nexus and Buckingham Group Contracting Ltd, at Pelaw Metro station on Wednesday 2 Feb 9am – 11am and 4pm – 6pm.