

# LCC's Response to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Mass Rapid Transit Public Consultation

Date: 18 September 2024

Report of: Director of City Development

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## Brief summary

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is the sole promoter and is leading on the delivery of the Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) scheme. On the 15<sup>th</sup> July WYCA commenced its first public consultation on the proposed routes for phase one of the MRT scheme. Phase one will see the delivery of two corridors, the Leeds Line, from St James's Hospital to the White Rose Shopping Centre and the Bradford Line from Leeds City Centre to Bradford City Centre. The public consultation seeks views on which of the high-level route options within these two corridors members of the public support and the Mass Transit Sustainability and Placemaking Strategies.

As a statutory consultee and landowner Leeds City Council (LCC) will provide a technical response to the public consultation which will set out LCC views on the Leeds and Bradford corridors, the Sustainability and Placemaking strategies and areas of the scheme where LCC require greater clarity.

This report sets out the details of the Council's proposed response along with a copy of the response attached in Appendix A.

The Leeds and Bradford corridor including route options are attached in Appendix B, C and D.

## Recommendations

- a) To note the Council's overall support for the proposals recognising that this is early consultation and noting the key points in the report in relation to areas the Council will need greater clarity on as the MRT scheme is developed.
- b) To endorse LCC's preference of route option L1 via Calverley Street and Infirmary Street and L6 via Elland Road, Elland Road Stadium and Ring Road Beeston in the Leeds Line corridor.
- c) To endorse the LCCs response that further discussions are required with WYCA in respect of the route options on the Bradford Line in order for LCC to state a preference.
- d) To endorse LCC's broad support of the Sustainability and Placemaking strategies whilst noting that further discussion is required with WYCA to develop the detail and how it will be implemented through the design.

- e) To endorse the response as detailed in Appendix A to WYCA's public consultation on the MRT scheme in WYCA's role as sole promoter.

## What is this report about?

- 1 WYCA is the sole promoter for the West Yorkshire MRT scheme.
- 2 On the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024, WYCA launched its first public consultation on the route options of phase one of the MRT scheme. The closing date for responses is the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024.
- 3 In October 2022, WYCA undertook consultation on the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision 2040. The vision proposed to build a modern, world-class public transport system using new forms of advanced mass transit that would connect West Yorkshire's key towns and cities and make public transport more accessible and inclusive whilst helping WYCA achieve its aim of net zero carbon emissions by 2038.
- 4 On the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022, Executive Board endorsed LCC's technical response to WYCA's West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision 2040 and this was subsequently issued to WYCA.
- 5 As detailed in the response to WYCA, MRT is key to unlocking further growth and regeneration in Leeds and as a principle the Council fully supports the programme. LCC recognise the strategic importance of MRT, its role in improving connectivity across the city and wider West Yorkshire region, and its potential to accelerate economic growth and regeneration, including the unlocking of new housing growth opportunities across the city. MRT will bring people within easier reach of jobs and opportunities, connect people with education, health and local centres in addition to social and leisure destinations in the city centre. It will play a critical role in helping Leeds to be the city where you don't need a car and to encourage mode shift from private car use to reduce congestion and meet the Council's carbon net zero targets.
- 6 The response included commentary on all the proposed corridors in Leeds at that time, however, in relation to the Leeds and Bradford Line corridors specifically, LCC responded as follows.
  - a) Leeds Line
    1. MRT has the potential to radically change access to the south of the city and particularly the corridor comprising Elland Road, the football stadium, White Rose Office Park and White Rose Shopping Centre and outer South Leeds and linking to growth points in Kirklees. The potential regeneration benefits that a fast, reliable, high-capacity transport link would provide to such destinations within this quadrant support LCC's preference for an alignment that would best facilitate this opportunity. Previous route options for New Generation Transport (NGT) and the negative feedback received need to be taken into account and we consider options which follow these former routes through Middleton to be sub-optimal relative to one focussed on Elland Road and White Rose and the economic growth opportunities this would unlock.
  - b) Bradford Line
    1. A strategically important connection for the region and a high priority for the two largest cities in West Yorkshire. In the absence of a firm commitment to heavy rail investment, LCC believe that work must be expedited to ensure that the lack of strategic connectivity does not impact negatively on economic growth. The route not only has the potential for enhanced connectivity between the two city centres but will also provide clear regeneration opportunities for key settlements along the route. LCC advocates working closely with the Combined Authority and local stakeholders to ensure that centres like Pudsey gain maximum benefit from the provision of an enhanced transport link.

- 7 Since the publication of the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Vision 2040 in 2022, WYCA has produced a Strategic Outline Case (SOC) which was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) in March 2024. The SOC identified the geographical corridors for phase one of the scheme. These corridors are the Leeds Line, from St James's Hospital to the White Rose Shopping Centre and the Bradford Line, from Leeds City Centre to Bradford City Centre.
- 8 WYCA aim to submit the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAo), the usual way of authorising transport infrastructure, mainly railways and tramways in England and Wales for the Leeds and Bradford Line in the second half of 2026.
- 9 WYCA is the sole promoter for the scheme and LCC is a statutory consultee and strategic partner. There is no statutory requirement for LCC to respond to the consultation at this stage, however, the informal response provides the Council with an opportunity to update the previous endorsement of the MRT Vision. LCC will formally respond to the statutory consultation following the submission of the draft TWAo in the second half of 2026.
- 10 This report outlines details of LCC's proposed technical response to the consultation. The response to be submitted to WYCA is documented in Appendix A.

### **What impact will this proposal have?**

- 11 LCC welcomes WYCA's MRT scheme. The aims and ambitions of MRT offer opportunities to further progress LCC aspirations and priorities in the following areas:
  - a) Support economic growth by addressing transport constraints in key growth areas and across the city.
  - b) Alignment with the Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy, Leeds Transformation Regeneration Programme and 10-year strategic partnership, Our Spaces Strategy, Local Plan Updates and Leeds Station Integrated Masterplan.
  - c) Improve health outcomes especially air quality by reducing transport emissions by offering sustainable public transport provision, and active travel modes.
  - d) Complement and further enhance the progress made in the City through investment programmes such as Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme, City Connect and the West Yorkshire plus Transport Fund.
  - e) Become a world-class connected city, that allows seamless end to end public transport journeys internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally.
  - f) Be an ambitious city, that attracts investment and plans for inclusive growth.
  - g) Become a smart city that embraces innovative technology to efficiently use, manage and maintain the transport network.
  - h) Continue to be a people-focused city, with well-connected neighbourhoods and a city centre that's easily accessible for everyone.
  - i) Be a healthy city, that allows more people to walk, cycle and be more active, with reduced traffic and emissions to create cleaner air.
  - j) Reduced car-borne carbon emissions, which will support the Council's net zero ambitions.
- 12 It is appreciated that this consultation is being undertaken at a very early stage of development of the proposals and that the designs, deliverability and operating parameters will be developed and refined significantly over the scheme development period. Taking this into account in respect of the Leeds Line, LCC continue to support routes that connect key destinations such as the White Rose Shopping Centre and Business Park, Elland Road Stadium, Leeds Station, the universities, hospitals, the Innovation Arc, and existing housing developments. This support extends to routes that offer opportunities to accelerate urban regeneration, and where MRT can be a catalyst for wider change by helping to unlock brownfield development and placemaking that contributes to new housing delivery and economic growth. The L1 route option provides strong growth opportunity subject to assessing the detailed proposals as they develop and particularly

strong against the other options. As such LCC's preferred route in the city centre is L1 via East Parade and Infirmary Street and in South Leeds, L6 via Elland Road, Elland Road Stadium and Ring Road Beeston.

13 LCC offer the following observations regarding the Leeds Line routes,

- a) MRT needs to run where existing public transport routes are currently at capacity or limited.
- b) MRT needs to be integrated with Leeds Station and Network Rail's Section 80 of the Railway Act 1993 onwards travel statutory obligations.
- c) MRT needs to ensure that city centre highway network resilience and emergency service access particularly to LGI is maintained.
- d) MRT routes through the city centre need to enhance and integrate with pedestrian, active travel, and bus routes.
- e) MRT routes need to integrate with other modes of travel including taxi ranks, private hire, and hackneys and loading bays and blue badge parking.
- f) MRT routes and stops need to enhance placemaking opportunities both within the immediate vicinity of the route and local district centres in which the routes run through.
- g) MRT routes should support and complement city centre event space, existing greenspace, and public realm.
- h) MRT routes should be integrated into local masterplanning work to support and act as a catalyst to regeneration and in particular housing growth and the opportunity of aligning with Leeds Transformation Regeneration to deliver 20,000 new homes.
- i) MRT routes safely integrate with the city's key destinations including health, sport, education centres and key destinations which attract high volumes of visitors such as the Leeds Arena, Leeds General Infirmary, St James Hospital and the Universities.
- j) MRT routes options do not interchange with the existing bus station under this initial phase and we will keep interchange options with buses under review as the scheme progresses.

14 In respect of the Bradford Line, LCC support improved connections between the city centre, Pudsey and Bradford and welcome further discussions with WYCA on the route options to understand the integration and impact of the routes on the existing railway and the DFT's Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals, how the disruption to the local highway will be kept to a minimum and how MRT will serve the communities along the route. LCC look forward to having further conversations on the design development with WYCA to fully inform future considerations on a preferred option for the Bradford Line.

15 Further observations regarding the Bradford Line include,

- a) MRT routes should support existing greenspace and public realm.
- b) MRT routes should support economic growth in this area of Leeds.
- c) MRT routes should minimise the impact on existing residential areas.
- d) MRT routes and stops need to enhance placemaking opportunities both within the immediate vicinity of the route and local district centres in which the routes run through
- e) Proposed MRT routes that utilise the highway network in this part of Leeds would require strategic network and junction modelling to demonstrate to LCC that all measures have been taken to minimise the impact and maintain network resilience.
- f) The design solution to reduce the impact on the green belt and support biodiversity net gains along the route.

16 More broadly as the scheme develops there will be design elements that will need to be resolved including.

- a) How MRT unlocks future economic growth for the city recognising the increasing densification and expansion of the city centre to the west and south-west.

- b) Placemaking opportunities along the routes and in local district centres and how it will integrate with and support the city's regeneration ambitions including the Leeds Transformation Regeneration Programme and Innovation Arc.
- c) How MRT will fully integrate with the existing highway, bus network, active travel routes and rail stations.
- d) Impact on existing highways including, Traffic Regulation Orders, UTMC control, abnormal load routes, drainage, road safety and existing structures.
- e) Impact on the city during construction recognising the need for WYCA, LCC and Network Rail to work closely to mitigate impact on people, businesses, events, and inward investment.
- f) How the impact of MRT on the District's landscape and green belt will be minimised.
- g) Delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain wherever possible within the line of the route.
- h) As the scheme develops it will be important to understand different customers' requirements and needs e.g. someone commuting from the M62, someone travelling from Bradford to University in Leeds or vice versa, someone bringing their child to a hospital appointment etc and how the beginning and end of their journey will integrate with the MRT system.

17 As part of the consultation process WYCA is also seeking public feedback on the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Placemaking and Sustainability strategies.

18 LCC is supportive of both the West Yorkshire Mass Transit Placemaking and Sustainability strategies. In respect of the Placemaking strategy its principals of health and wellbeing, connectivity, identity and adaptability and resilience align to LCCs placemaking goals of creating welcoming and inclusive spaces that reflect Leeds's diverse communities, enhancing connectivity by making places easy to navigate through, celebrating local identity and enhancing Leeds's built and natural assets and promoting resilience and environmental sustainability by providing infrastructure that supports business whilst being resilient to climate change.

19 The West Yorkshire Sustainability strategy is based on four main pillars:

- Transport - which aims to improve journey times, frequency, capacity, and reliability.
- Environment - which aims to enhance local biodiversity and improve air quality
- Social - improving health and wellbeing of local communities
- Economic - which aims to support growth and job creation whilst improving access to education and housing.

20 As per the Placemaking strategy these pillars align with the Council's ambitions set out in the Best City Ambition and supporting policies and it is important that as the MRT scheme develops it integrates with complementary but separate programmes such as Leeds Transformation Regeneration, Innovation Arc, and Leeds programme of international events.

21 Over the last 5 years there has been significant change in national rail strategy. The Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands in 2021 and Network North in 2023 ignored the growth and statutory spatial plans developed over the previous 10 years in the form of Leeds Local Development Framework, South Bank Regeneration Framework and the Leeds City Region HS2 Growth Strategy. Instead, the new policies introduced a series of investments in existing railway and mass transit. These investments are an important interim step to enabling the future growth potential of the City and Region. However, these are as yet untested in respect of how and to what extent they will support economic growth as an integrated network. As the MRT routes and designs are developed it will be equally as important that work is undertaken to understand the

wider West Yorkshire economic growth and benefits and spatial context of the investment in MRT and rail. The Council will seek to provide its full support to WYCA in developing these.

### How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

#### 22 Health and wellbeing

- a) The promotion of MRT will add and complement to the existing public transport offer as well as cycling and walking links to provide a fully integrated travel alternative. MRT is aimed at supporting healthy and physically active lifestyles through improved access to health and leisure facilities whilst encouraging the feeling of safety when using transport infrastructure.

#### 23 Inclusive Growth

- a) MRT aims to boost productivity and drive economic growth by increasing connections so that people have greater access to job, education, and opportunities in a more reliant, efficient and affordable way. It will help connect towns and districts, housing and employment areas and improve transport opportunities for many deprived communities.

#### 24 Zero Carbon

- a) MRT aims to tackle the climate emergency by providing an attractive alternative to the car, improving air quality by being a low emission form of transport and landscaped to promote biodiversity.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: Little London and Woodhouse, Beeston and Holbeck, Hunslet and Riverside, Middleton Park, Morley North, Morley South, Kirkstall, Armley, Bramley and Stanningley, Pudsey, Calverley and Farsley, Gipton and Harehills and Burmantofts and Richmond Hill.

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

25 WYCA is the sole promoter of the West Yorkshire MRT scheme and has primary responsibility for all consultation and engagement including MPs, Leader of the Council, Executive Member, Ward Councillors, strategic partners, statutory consultees, landowners, businesses, and members of the public.

26 WYCA launched the first consultation on Phase 1 of the MRT scheme on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024 and it is due to close on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Its second consultation is currently scheduled for 2025.

27 LCC has and will continue to actively support WYCA's consultation strategy. LCC is actively encouraging partners, businesses and residents to respond directly to WYCA's MRT consultation and has a signposting process in place should any MRT enquiries be received by LCC.

28 LCC has worked closely with WYCA on the active engagement with the Leader of the Council, Executive Member and affected Ward Councillors regarding MRT and will continue to do so as the scheme develops.

29 LCC has also provided Member training on the proposed TWAO process and is making this available to other Districts as required. .

### What are the resource implications?

30 The MRT scheme is led by WYCA as the sole promoter.

- 31 As statutory consultee, LCC has an obligation to provide information on its statutory functions including Planning, Highways and Environmental Health. In addition, the Council as landowner will be impacted by some of the options. Where WYCA requires information in relation to these Council functions, it has committed to meet all associated costs.
- 32 Providing this information to WYCA and its delivery partners will be an additional pressure on LCC resources. Recruitment will be required across several Council departments to support this, and resource requirements will be developed in consultation with WYCA.

### **What are the key risks and how are they being managed?**

- 33 Responding to WYCA's public consultation provides a good opportunity for LCC to demonstrate its broad support for MRT whilst providing feedback on areas in which LCC would like further engagement to understand the detail as it develops and assess the impact and proposed mitigations.
- 34 The development of a MRT system predominantly on existing highway which already has multiple uses will be complex and the impacts of not finding solutions which recognise these competing needs would have a significant impact on economic growth. To help mitigate this risk the Council will work with WYCA to share its breadth and depth of local and technical delivery knowledge and expertise.
- 35 There is a risk that the full potential of the MRT system is not realised if its design is not integrated with the localities and communities it serves. The scheme will need to be developed in harmony with growth and regeneration opportunities already being developed by the Council such as Leeds Transformation Regeneration Programme, Innovation Arc, and the Council will work with WYCA to maximise the benefits of MRT.
- 36 The consenting strategy for MRT is likely to mean that a Transport and Works Act Order(s) (TWAO) will be sought by WYCA to deliver the scheme. A TWAO would be likely to result in planning permission and highway approvals being determined for the scheme by the Secretary of State for Transport. There will be significant interfaces between the scheme and existing and ongoing policy and highway operations. When required the Council will formally respond as statutory consultee to this process and will wherever possible work closely with WYCA to identify risks and help resolve them as the scheme develops.

### **What are the legal implications?**

- 37 There are no legal implications to LCC responding to WYCA's public consultation.
- 38 A response to this consultation provides an opportunity for LCC to advise WYCA on areas of the scheme in which future engagement would be beneficial.
- 39 As statutory consultee and in line with the consenting strategy for MRT, LCC intends to provide a formal response to the submission of the draft TWAO for the Leeds and Bradford Lines in the second half of 2026 and further advice will continue as the scheme is reaching its final stage under the TWAO procedure.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success.**

### **What other options were considered?**

- 40 Option One – Respond to WYCA's public consultation. It is recommended to progress with this option as it provides an opportunity for LCC to demonstrate broad support for the MRT proposals whilst providing information on future areas of engagement.

41 Option Two – Do nothing. This option is rejected as strategic partner, statutory consultee and landowner it is important that LCC shares the key issues and opportunities arising from the scheme.

### **How will success be measured?**

42 LCC to submit a response to WYCA's public consultation by the closing date of the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

43 The closing date of the informal public consultation is the 30<sup>th</sup> September. The response will be sent to WYCA by the Director of City Development.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix A – Draft response to WYCA
- Appendix B – Leeds Line City Centre Routes
- Appendix C – South Leeds Routes
- Appendix D – Bradford Line Routes

### **Background papers**

- None.