ECCLES STATION NEWS

APRIL 2015

Once again, welcome to ESN. It's a bit factually packed this month so one or two regular items are dropped to fit stuff in. We start to take a look at the very important franchise guidance documents released in February, and in Transport for Eccles continue a look at Metrolink provision. ***Editor.***

FRECCLES
Friends of Eccles Station

ANNUAL PRESENTATION MEETING

WEDNESDAY 1st APRIL 2015
7pm

Keynote Speaker:

Amanda White, Head of Rail

Transport for Greater Manchester

Plus presentations from FRECCLES about our work at Eccles Railway Station since 2005

- **Eccles Community Hall (ECHO)**
- **Eccles Town Hall, Church Street, Eccles M30 OLH**
- **Disabled access and lift available,**
  - **parking free in local car parks from 6pm**

NEWS

ESN had a frustrating visit to Oxford Road, Newton le Willows, and St Helen's Junction on Tuesday 3rd March **in search of a ride on the electric class 319 units** but noted only their absence. It seems they started service only on Thursday 5th, some two and a half months late. They are now operating the daytime hourly semi fast trains between Manchester Airport and Liverpool Lime Street. These nicely refurbished electric units are a welcome addition to the local rolling stock, but on travelling on one a few days later ESN observed a number of small ways that it showed its age – they were first introduced in 1987. The four car units will operate Lime Street to Wigan North Western when that line is energised, and **it is estimated that they will start to operate the Lime Street to Victoria stopping service in May.**

One of the newly refurbished class 319 electric units travelling between St Helen's Junction and Newton le Willows.

Photos JERayner.

*An interesting table of **rolling stock ages** is to be found on the Office of Rail Regulation website at: http://dataportal.orr.gov.uk/displayreport/report/html/ab2f70d4-d415-4dea-b8ea-bf9925011260*
*This table shows that it is **not just Northern Rail that has old rolling stock** in service. In fact the data in this table is a tribute to the robust nature of railway rolling stock construction! The average of the ages (at end of 2014) given for each operating company is about 16.5 years with Northern on 25 years old (similar to Arriva Trains Wales, but Merseyrail stock is 35 years old. First Great Western and East Coast both operate with stock 3 decades old, but HSTs are rather classier conveyances than are granted to Northern! In contrast Southern, and South Eastern stock has seen about 14 years of service, and London Overground is averaging 3.8 years. **Yes – three point eight years!***

Brother hacks at lesser journalistic efforts such as The Times, The Sun, Mirror etc have been serving up their recycled dross **'EASTER TRAVEL CHAOS FOR RAIL TRAVELLERS' etc.** There is never a good time to repair transport arteries and it cannot always be cost effective to do it in the early hours of the morning, but let's have no analysis - it fills the columns.

In fact over **Easter passenger numbers drop by 20% to 40%** compared to normal so it is as good a time as any for major projects to be carried out. Mark Carne, Network Rail chief executive, said: "Our improvement programme this Easter, delivered by a 14,000 strong army of rail workers, is focused on delivering a better service for passengers. I'd like to apologise to any passengers whose plans are affected by our improvement work, but I hope

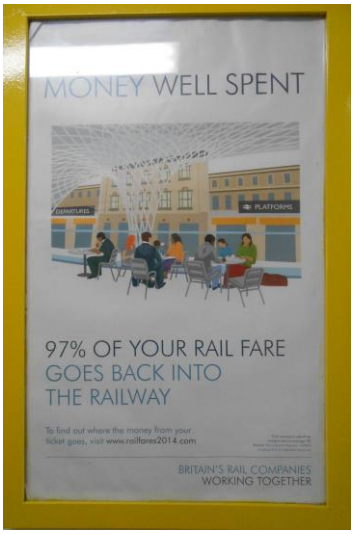
they will understand that this is a quieter time on the railway and we want to minimise the overall impact of these vital projects on passengers."

14,000 railway workers will be on duty over the four days of Easter to do major repairs and upgrades on the railway network.

Photo Network Rail

*Nine more rail stations across Greater Manchester are set to get around **250 new bike parking places.** Transport for Greater Manchester **(TfGM)** and Northern Rail successfully bid for £636,000 from the Department for Transport (DfT), which is providing £15 million to improve cycle parking facilities at rail stations across the country. **Gorton, Heaton Chapel, Hyde Central, Marple, Mills Hill, and Trafford Park** stations will all benefit from covered stands while **Cheadle Hulme and Deansgate** are in line for enclosed secure cycle hubs. New covered cycle racks at the Fairfield Street entrance of **Piccadilly station** will provide much needed additional cycle parking with protection from the weather.*

Misinformation on the railways never ceases in the UK, be it from newspapers, radio or TV reporters, road lobby, political hopefuls or trades union sources who are ideologically opposed to the franchising. On the next page is one of the still too few examples of the railway fighting back.

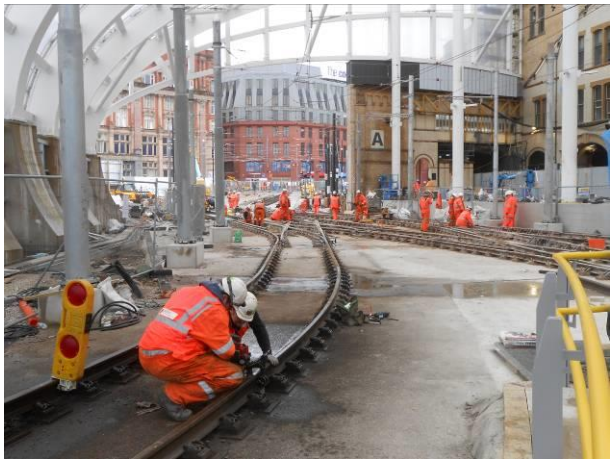


However ESN tried to contact the website referred to on the poster **and had no luck in obtaining information.** Most results were attempts to sell rail tickets or even that rail domain name, and the editor deemed some of these to be worthy of suspicion. More effort needed!

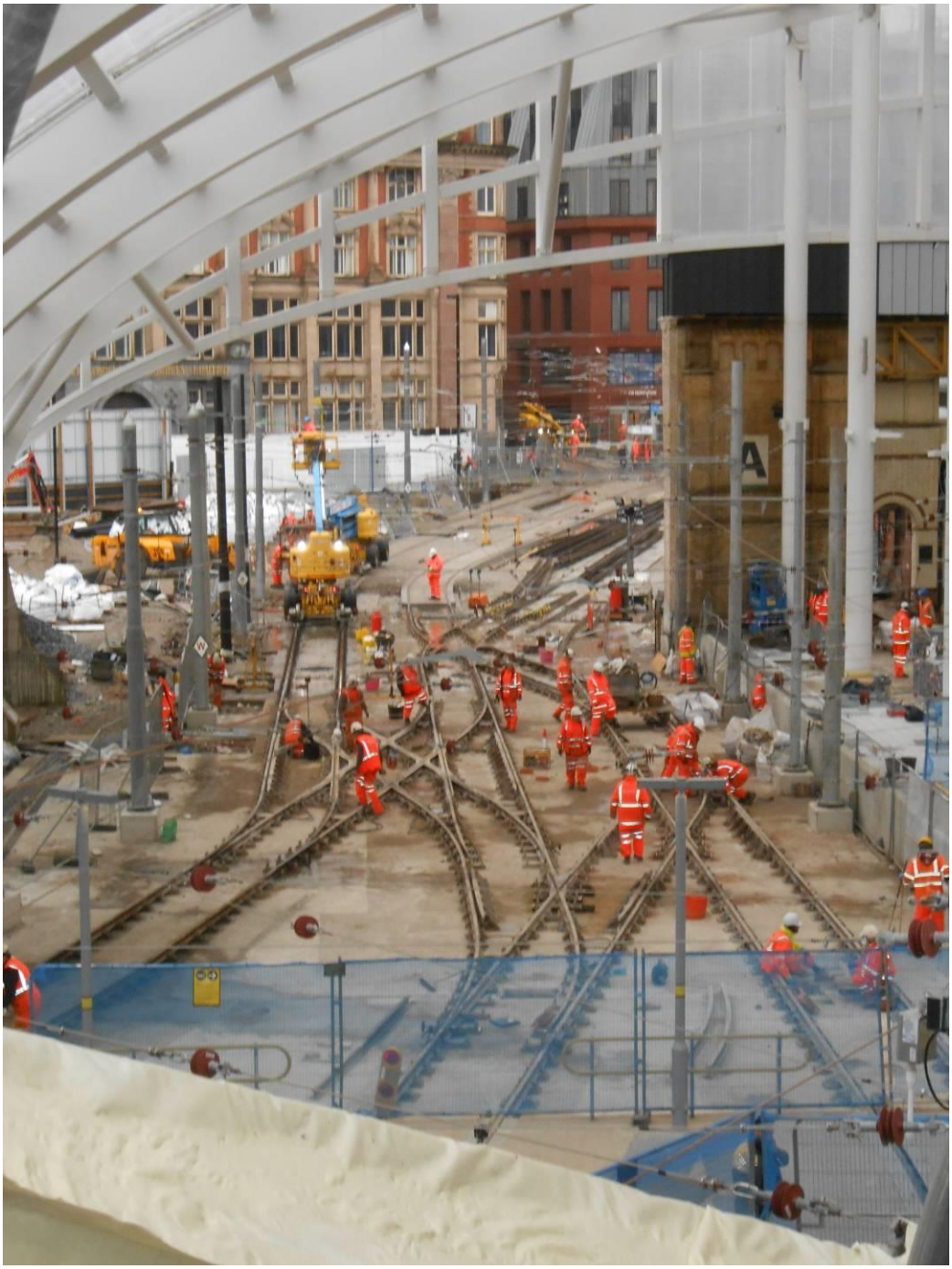
Manchester is a hive of rail activity *with work progressing on the* ***Metrolink second city-crossing and Victoria station's transformation*** *coming towards completion. Here is a photo record of some bits of this major effort (all photos courtesy of JERayner):*

Work at St Peter's Square – the current tram platforms are behind the fence on the left.

Work on the second city-crossing at Cross Street near Victoria station.



Above and below, large numbers of track workers were needed to have the new stop open for through traffic of trams a couple of days later. Notice the unusual curved diamond crossing in the centre of the picture. Most of this layout is now in regular use.



A new canopy on the tram platforms, and overhead the inflatable roof material is put in place.

ARTICLES

Ministerial Approval.

A letter dated 25th March from Martin Woods at the Transport Works Act Orders Unit and headed "TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992: APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED NETWORK RAIL (ORDSALL CHORD) ORDER AND DEEMED PLANNING PERMISSION" conveyed the decision of the Secretary of State for Transport to approve Networks Rail's proposals which will allow trains to run directly between Victoria and Piccadilly stations by means of a newly constructed viaduct. Copies of this letter are being sent to those who appeared at the inquiry and to all statutory objectors whose objections were referred to the inquiry under section 11(3) of the TWA but who did not appear. The letter

states that ‘There is no statutory right to challenge the validity of the Secretary of State's direction that planning permission shall be deemed to be granted for development for which provision is included in the Order. Any person who is aggrieved by the giving of the direction may, however, seek permission of the High Court to challenge the decision by judicial review.’

On the same day, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government gave the various listed building consents required for implementation of the scheme as recommended by the Inspector at paragraph 887 of his report, and a certificate under section 19(1)(b) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 in respect of open space land that would be compulsorily acquired for the purposes of the scheme.

The scheme was subject to objections on the ground of significant damage to an historic area, and that a better alternative was available. This alternative, known as option 15, was to be a viaduct on a larger radius curve through the currently empty land known as Middlewood Locks (this latter proposal appeared quite late in the planning process). The response in the letter of approval is: “The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that the cumulative substantial harm to heritage assets which the scheme would cause does not align with the statutory duties and the national and local policies referred to....(but) ...the scale of the benefits that would be realised across Greater Manchester and the North of England by the scheme, the harm to heritage assets in the vicinity would in this instance be outweighed by those public benefits (IR 877-882).”

On Option 15 the response is: “the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector that considerable weight must be given to the formally adopted policies for the regeneration of Central Salford which has suffered from severe economic and social decline for many years... the delay and uncertainty that would result from rejection of the scheme proposed by NR would, in the immediate term, cause a significant setback to the ongoing regeneration of the Salford Central area (IR 636-644)...the severance of the site by rail infrastructure under the Option 15 proposals would be inherently harmful and would militate against successful comprehensive redevelopment (IR 648-652)... Option 15 as currently framed would be unlikely to support delivery of comprehensive regeneration of Middlewood Locks (IR 663).”

Annex 1 to the letter lists additional conditions that must be met at various stages of the project and extra planning approvals that must be obtained.

These relate to protecting the local natural and built environment in terms of visual amenity, community safety etc.

The full text of the letter can be seen at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/416817/Ordsall_Chord_Decision_Letter.pdf

Invitation to Tender.

The Department for Transport (DfT) published documents on 27th February setting out what the bidders for the new Northern franchise will be required to do. The shortlisted bidders for the Northern franchise are:

- Abellio Northern Ltd (currently runs Northern as a joint venture with Serco)
- Arriva Rail North Ltd
- Govia Northern Ltd

The new Northern franchise will begin in April 2016. To view the tender documents please visit the DfT website: published documents

With respect to Eccles station Northern services from December 2017 to December 2019, the following are the minimum service requirements specified in the documents:

Table Liv1A

MONDAY TO FRIDAY trains calling at Eccles and going to Manchester (Piccadilly, Oxford Road, or Victoria) the earliest arrival at Manchester to be before 06.30 and the last arrival there not before 00.15

Period	02.00 to 06.59	07.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 15.59	16.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum no of trains	1 *(1)*	6 *(4)*	6 *(6)*	6 *(5)*	3 *(3)*	2 *(3)*	none

Thus specifying an hourly basic service as minimum with approximately half hourly in peak periods (shaded yellow). The franchisee may be willing to offer more trains than this. *(The figures in brackets represent the current timetable provision.)*

Interestingly the specification for Eccles is given as part of a Chester/Ellesmere Port to Manchester table which also specifies:

Trains from Chester to a Manchester station via Warrington Bank Quay the first to arrive by 08.00 and the last not to arrive before 21.00. In addition there must be one service departing from Ellesmere Port to Manchester arriving between 08:00 and 08:59, and one service departing from Ellesmere Port between 18:30 and 19:29 to Manchester. *These services shall call at Manchester Victoria and also at [Bradford Interchange or Leeds?]

Period	02.00 to 06.59	07.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 15.59	16.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum no of trains	0	2+1*from EPort	6	3	2+1*from Eport	0	Must be via Bank Quay

Hitherto, Chester to Manchester via Warrington Bank Quay has been exclusively an Arriva Trains Wales route.

Notice that more trains are required at Eccles than are specified on this part of the table. Interpretation seems to be open to the franchisee which would allow three options for serving Eccles. The basic service could be these Chester to Manchester trains calling, augmented by some Liverpool to Manchester ones, or more likely mainly Liverpool & Manchester trains calling augmented by some of these Chester trains calling, or thirdly the franchisee could choose to have both services calling to provide a greater than minimum service.

The minimum services for Saturdays from December 2017 are as follows:

Table Liv1C

SATURDAY trains calling at Eccles and going to Manchester (Piccadilly, Oxford Road, or Victoria) the earliest arrival at Manchester to be before 06.30 and the last arrival there not before 00.15

Period	02.00 to 06.59	07.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 15.59	16.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum no of trains	1 *(1)*	4 *(4)*	6 *(6)*	5 *(5)*	3 *(3)*	2 *(2)*	none

(The figures in brackets represent the current timetable provision.)

Again this is part of a Chester to Manchester table with the Chester trains specified as:

Trains from Chester to a Manchester station via Warrington Bank Quay the first to arrive by 08.00 and the last not to arrive before 21.00. Fifteen services departing from Warrington Bank Quay to Manchester shall also call at Hebden Bridge and Leeds.

Period	02.00 to 06.59	07.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 15.59	16.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum no of trains	0	3	6	3	3	0	Must be via Bank Quay

Once again there are three possible ways to provide a service at Eccles on a Saturday. If Chester trains were to call at Eccles this would be a very good leisure option with fast travel to either Chester or the Calder Valley on Saturdays.

Table Liv1E

SUNDAY trains calling at Eccles and going to Manchester (Piccadilly, Oxford Road, or Victoria) the earliest arrival at Manchester to be by 09.15 and the last arrival there not before 00.00

Period	02.00 to 09.59	10.00 to 18.59	19.00 to 21.59	22.00 to 01.59	notes
Minimum trains	1 *(1)*	9 *(9)*	3 *(3)*	3 *(3)*	none

Again this is part of a Chester to Manchester table but this specifies zero trains from Chester in each of the time intervals so presumably this will be a Liverpool & Manchester stopping service.

ESN will examine the specifications starting December 2019 in next month's edition, and will discuss the important implications for the future of Eccles.

Transport for Eccles (VI).

A point missed out from our previous articles is that both the bus station and tram stop are well lit in the evenings. This is an important contribution to passenger comfort, safety and feeling safe. In turn this is likely to contribute to increased patronage of services using these facilities. The last article noted the high standard of facilities and their maintenance at the tram stop.

The well appointed Eccles tram stop on Regent Street is the terminus of a meandering line from Manchester via Salford Quays that started operations on 6th December 1998. Other stops along the line have similarly good care and facilities. The first stop after the underpass is Ladywell, adjacent to the retail 'West One' development. There is a sizeable park and ride area which is well used and which is conveniently sited near the roundabouts of the motorway and A roads.

On departure from Ladywell the tram shares road space (and 30mph speed limit) to Weaste. Ironically this is the longest stretch without a stop making it a bit of a walk to Stott Lane and the large source of potential passengers that is Salford Royal Hospital. The sharing makes the tram service vulnerable to disruption by other road transport users. Frequent road vehicle crashes, occasional brainless parking and very frequent car-caused traffic queues have a significant effect on punctuality and also reduce reliability to a degree. The tram continues to share the road space beyond Weaste to Langworthy and then to Broadway from where it has its own segregated route to Manchester.

After Broadway there is a triangular junction to Media City before the closely spaced Harbour City, Anchorage, Salford Quays and Exchange Quay stops. It is on this stretch that the tram grinds round many tight, slow curves (often 5mph) and over a tightly curved, steep graded viaduct, the sole purpose of

which seems to be to preserve half a dozen car parking spaces. This must cause a significant degree of expensive wear to rails and tyres. On leaving Exchange Quay the tram again grinds round tight curves and over the Manchester Ship Canal to the as yet little-used Pomona stop. However this is a good stop for the ticket checkers because there is nothing near it and no alternative transport for the ticketless free riders ejected from the tram.

A faster stretch brings the line to Cornbrook, Deansgate & Castlefield (on the western edge of the city centre and being reconstructed), St Peter's Square, Piccadilly Gardens and finally Piccadilly Station stop which is in the undercroft of the railway station to which it is connected by lifts, staircases and escalators. From here the route continues to Ashton under Lyne. The Eccles line also makes connections with other parts of the network. These are at Cornbrook (to Altrincham, Victoria, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and East Didsbury) and Piccadilly Gardens (to Bury, Rochdale and Oldham).
This route is not laid out for speed of journey, quite the opposite. The tram line has 11 stops on 6.4 km (4 miles) and takes 33 minutes from Eccles to Piccadilly Station at an average speed of 7.3 mph (Do remember though that this is a better time than a bus and walk from Piccadilly Gardens. Additionally it serves a number of key points. However in contrast Altrincham to Piccadilly station has 10 stations, 7.6 miles, taking 34 minutes so 13.4mph.

In fact none of the routes is laid out for speed and this shows with inter-stop distances on Metrolink averaging approximately 0.73 miles. The spacing of the stops is such that in theory it should near enough maximise the number of passengers willing to use the trams because transport research has shown that people will usually only walk a maximum of half a mile to or from a transport staging post. In other words they are very much local transport for intermediate points (although one is tempted always to look at the time taken to the terminus of the line!).

The Eccles line has average inter stop distances of 0.36 miles so is very local in purpose: in fact it is really a line more for the benefit of Salford Quays area travel to and from Manchester or Eccles. This is similar to the Rochdale branch – it is very much for the benefit of the Oldham area to and from Manchester or Rochdale. Note also that the routes serve the main areas of population and employment – this is not a transport mode for rural areas!

The slowness of the Eccles line affects the total journey times to the rest of the Metrolink network. Here are journey times for daytime Mon to Sat travel on the trams:

	Tram		Bus
Ashton	1 hour		1h 17min
Rochdale	1h 31min		1h 39min
Oldham	1hr 6m		1h 15min
Bury	1hr 7m		1h 27min
Altrincham	50min		1h 16min
East Didsbury	1hr 4min		1h 8min
Airport	1hr 13m		1h 38min
Compare Bury – Altrincham		55min (cf)!	1h 53min

With the strange exception of the Eccles line to Manchester, the trams are usually quicker to use than the bus on directly comparable journeys, and nearly all tram journeys would qualify as a reasonable commuting time.

The author suggests the following spectrum of transport modes for consideration:

Mode	**Inter stop gap**	**normal use**	**Mph**
foot	1yd to 1 mile	1 to 2miles	2mph
bus	100yds to 500yds	10miles	10mph
tram	***500yds to 1mile***	***10miles***	***7 – 15mph***
stopping train	1mile to 5miles	10 – 30miles	25-30mph
semi fast train	5miles to 10miles	30miles upwards	50mph
fast train	10miles upwards	50miles upwards	80mph

(These are merely the author's guestimates and could be open to the objection that a latent theory influenced the figures, so the reader may wish to consider the figures in the light of his or her own experience, and to debate where to put

the bicycle and car in this spectrum. The author did start to construct the above table making reasonable estimates and the following conclusion began to grow from them!)

This thinking leads the author to suggest a rule of thumb: *roughly speaking passengers mainly use a transport mode for a journey range between inter stop gap and one hour's travelling distance.* This fits well with transport research that shows that people are reluctant to do commutes exceeding 1 hour's duration. After all there are still only 24 hours in a day! As transport systems speed up the average commutes gradually increase in distance but not duration.

Readers can find more details about Metrolink on Wikipedia at
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester_Metrolink

Next month ESN will examine the light rail vehicles and services on the Eccles Metrolink line. At this point it is worth noting the success of the tram system throughout Greater Manchester in attracting customers and ESN intends to study the tram system provision in order to ask: "Are there any lessons for our railway services in all this?"

Transport Watch-Out.

The first quarter of the year seems to be the silly season for reporting on the railways. Readers may wish to look at the recently published Institute of Economic Affairs article about paving over the railways and providing bus ways to reduce fares by 40%, and improve commuting. It is to be found at:

http://www.iea.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/Briefing_1501_Paving%20over%20the%20tracks_web.pdf

The authors are Paul Withrington and Dr Richard Wellings, the first name of which rang a bell with ESN. A look at the innocuously named Transport Watch website confirmed suspicions that this is a successor organisation to the much more honestly named Railway Conversion League – a long time pro-road propaganda organisation. This is ironic given that the article laments the supposed strength of railway propaganda and the website claims to take a 'dispassionate' view of transport matters yet you could be forgiven for thinking that Paul Withrington seems to have specialised in being anti railways. While there are valid points to be made about reducing costs on the railways it seems

to ESN that this one should be taken with a pinch of salt as it comes from such a stable. However take a look for yourself and see.

When you have finished chuckling at: "The issue of traffic noise would also appear to be relatively easily addressed. The intermittent but very noisy passage of trains would typically be replaced by the much quieter but more constant hum of buses and coaches." *Then perhaps you could wander down to the M62 to enjoy that quiet hum!*

On ESN's reading, the article fails on a number of counts:

It does not mention that the railway is a mixed traffic artery not just a commuter service. What happens to the displaced long distance traveller, and the displace goods traffic?

The mixed traffic nature limits the capacity of the artery. The railway could carry much more if all traffic were same pattern commuter services as is proposed for its replacement. This would not require the costs of conversion to road.

Potential capacity of the proposed system appears always to be compared to ***current*** traffic on the rails.

The inferior safety standards of an intensively operated road system are not discussed.

That buses are cheaper to buy than railway carriages is partly because of inferior crash standards. There is no discussion of whether this would be politically acceptable as a replacement for the railways.

Readers may wish to look at the report and the Transport Watch website to further inform their opinions.

Engineering works – Easter weekend.

Start date 03/04/2015 End date 06/04/2015

Routes affected

Download map of route affected - map ***First TransPennine Express*** between Manchester Piccadilly and Preston / Blackpool North / Barrow-in-Furness also between Manchester Victoria and Liverpool Lime Street. ***Northern Rail*** between Wigan Wallgate / Bolton and Stalybridge / Huddersfield also between Southport and Manchester Airport also between Manchester Victoria and Clitheroe / Todmorden / Huddersfield / Leeds also between Southport and Hazel Grove / Chester.

Description

Engineering work is taking place in the Manchester Victoria and Salford Crescent areas with various line closures.

First TransPennine Express

Services between Manchester and Preston / Blackpool North / Barrow-in-Furness / Windermere will be diverted between Deansgate and Preston and will not call at Salford Crescent, Bolton, Horwich Parkway, Chorley or Buckshaw Parkway. Replacement buses will operate between Manchester Airport / Manchester Piccadilly and Preston via affected stations.

Services between Liverpool Lime Street and Newcastle, are diverted to run between Manchester Piccadilly and Newcastle. Passengers should use other trains between Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester Piccadilly.

The 23:20 (Friday and Monday) Manchester Airport to York will be diverted and not call at Manchester Victoria.

Northern Rail

Services between Manchester Victoria and Clitheroe will be replaced by buses between Manchester Victoria / Salford Crescent and Blackburn.

Services between Leeds and Manchester Victoria (via Bradford Interchange) will be replaced by buses between Manchester Victoria and Rochdale / Hebden Bridge.

Services between Leeds and Manchester Victoria (via Dewsbury) will start from / terminate at Muston. Passengers are advised that connections between train and bus are not possible at Muston. Passengers should change at Rochdale.

Services between Manchester Victoria and Huddersfield will be replaced by buses between Manchester Victoria and Ashton-under-Lyne.

Services between Manchester Victoria and Blackpool North will run between Preston and Blackpool North only. Buses will run between Manchester Victoria and Salford Central, Salford Central and Preston.

Services between Manchester Victoria and Liverpool Lime Street will be diverted to start from / terminate at Manchester Oxford Road, with an hourly service running in each direction.

Services between Manchester Victoria and Wigan Wallgate via Bolton will not run.

Services between Manchester Airport and Southport will be diverted via Atherton. Up to 2 trains per hour will run between Manchester Oxford Road and Wigan Wallgate.

Services between Manchester Victoria and Wigan Wallgate / Southport / Kirkby via Atherton will run to an amended timetable providing up to 2 trains per hour diverted to run to / from Manchester Oxford Road.

Planning your journey For full details of these changes and the impact on your journey, please use the National Rail Enquiries Journey Planner

Eccles Station News welcomes feedback from readers. Please do not hesitate to send in your own views, photos or snippets of news to the e-mail address below.

To find out more about **FRECCLES** or to make contact see our **website**: www.freccles.org or e mail us at info@freccles.org.uk

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