

Response to Manchester Recovery Task Force Public Consultation

from Friends of Eccles Station (FRECCLES) and Friends of Patricroft Station (FrOPS)

FRECCLES and FrOPS welcome the consultation on timetable improvement options for the Manchester area. We welcome the well-presented description of the problems affecting train performance, especially the role of congestion on the Castlefield Corridor. We agree strongly that the aim should be for rail passengers on all Manchester corridors to have a regular 30 minute rail service wherever possible.

We think that the the Task Force has overlooked the need to improve the rail service for Eccles and Patricroft on the Chat Moss Line. Both stations have shown considerable increases in patronage in recent years (to 197,000 p.a. at Eccles and 117,000 p.a. at Patricroft – *ORR station usage estimates 2019-20*). Additionally Eccles provides an important interchange to the Manchester Metrolink system, and Patricroft is well placed to provide a connection to the new RHS Garden Bridgewater attraction opening in May this year.

At present Eccles and Patricroft only have an hourly service to Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport, that is supplemented in the peak period with an approximately hourly service to Manchester Victoria. The peak period services are irregularly spaced. There is a justified requirement for an evenly spaced 30 minute service throughout the day at both Eccles and Patricroft, with alternate trains serving Manchester Victoria and Manchester Piccadilly. Such a service would undoubtedly attract an even greater number of passengers.

Consideration should be given to the potential benefits of terminating some services from east of Manchester at Eccles, using the existing Eccles loop line with re-instatement of the former platform. With a limited amount of work this development could be brought into service relatively quickly. This would avoid some congestion due to terminating such services at Manchester Victoria.

Question 1 We support the aim of standardising and simplifying service patterns if this will significantly improve overall train performance. Giving Eccles and Patricroft 1 tph to Manchester Victoria and 1 tph to Manchester Piccadilly, evenly spaced, would be an important step towards such standardisation and simplification, and should be considered for all options.

Question 2 We give provisional support to the approach of measuring the service level and performance impacts across all passengers. Without more details of the simulation models used it is difficult to judge whether the results are robust. It is also quite possible that the peak / off-peak travel ratio may permanently change post-COVID.

Question 3 None of the options propose a 2 tph service for Eccles and Patricroft, serving Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Victoria. We believe that Option B can most easily accommodate such a service, and therefore Option B is our preferred option.

Question 4 Detailed comments on the options:

Option A Either the Chester to Leeds service, or the N.Wales to Stalybridge service, should call at Eccles and Patricroft during off-peak periods (while retaining the peak period 1tph Liverpool to Manchester Victoria and the all-day 1 tph Liverpool to Manchester Airport stopping services). Off-peak traffic on the Chat Moss Line would be reduced from 6 to 5 tph under option A, so these

additional calls should certainly be feasible. Times should be arranged to provide as near a regular 30 minute service as possible at Eccles and Patricroft throughout the day.

Option B The Chester to Stalybridge service should call at Eccles and Patricroft during off-peak periods (while retaining the peak period 1tph Liverpool to Manchester Victoria and the all-day 1 tph Liverpool to Manchester Airport stopping services). Off-peak traffic on the Chat Moss Line would be reduced from 6 to 5 tph under option B, so these additional calls should certainly be feasible. Times should be arranged to provide as near a regular 30 minute service as possible at Eccles and Patricroft throughout the day.

Option C One of the two Chester to Leeds services should call at Eccles and Patricroft during off-peak periods (while retaining the peak period 1tph Liverpool to Manchester Victoria stopping service). Off-peak traffic on the Chat Moss Line would be reduced from 6 to 5 tph under option C, so these additional calls should certainly be feasible. Times should be arranged to provide as near a regular 30 minute service as possible at Eccles and Patricroft throughout the day.

We are opposed to the all-day 1 tph Liverpool to Manchester stopping service terminating at Manchester Oxford Road, since the latter station is a very inconvenient terminus for passengers from Eccles and Patricroft, who often need to interchange with other services at Manchester Piccadilly, or need to travel to Manchester Airport. The Liverpool to Manchester Oxford Road service should therefore be extended to Manchester Airport. This should be feasible since Option C as described only has 9 tph between Manchester Oxford Road and Manchester Piccadilly, and this extension avoids a terminating service at Oxford Road.

Questions 5, 6 and 7 Not applicable