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The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Great Minster House
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By email: Transport.Secretary@dft.gov.uk

26 November 2021

Dear Grant

Thank you for your call last week. I am deeply disappointed about the outcomes of the Integrated Rail Plan. I and other leaders in West Yorkshire are angry and frustrated by the promises that have been seemingly broken. Our communities feel betrayed.

The IRP as it stands is simply not good enough for West Yorkshire. It does not support my ambitions for a stronger, fairer and better-connected region which meets the challenge of the climate emergency, nor does it meet the Government's own ambitions for levelling up. The plan will limit the growth and potential of West Yorkshire for many decades to come. I would like to make it clear to you that this will not be the end of our ambition.

Northern Powerhouse Rail, with a stop in central Bradford, and delivery of high speed services to Leeds via Sheffield, are core to the future plans for these cities and the wider region. They would be transformational for our economy, for decarbonisation, and the additional rail capacity we need. I will not stop making the case for either of these projects.

I would like an urgent meeting with you to clarify the next steps and details of your plan. We need to be able to work together and I propose the following actions as a start.

- 1. High speed connections between Leeds and Sheffield:** Connectivity between the two Core Cities of Leeds and Sheffield requires radical improvement. Your decision to scrap the HS2 Eastern Leg casts uncertainty as to how such an improvement will now be achieved. Instead, the long-awaited IRP simply commits to a further study. It is most concerning that the IRP proposes to significantly reduce the number of daily seats from Leeds to London from the 4,500 available under the HS2 Eastern Leg scheme to a best case "potential" of 2,500. This is only 56% of the seats previously planned. We must now urgently progress the proposal to assess how best to take high speed services to Leeds via Sheffield. The IRP outlines that the Government will look at "*how best to get HS2 services to Leeds*", not *if* high speed services are to get to Leeds.

Whilst I am very concerned that we spend yet more taxpayers' money and more time looking at options that have already been considered, if we are to do this, I ask that we work together to do so. I propose a truly joint piece of work, with a joint team of local partners, including WYCA and Leeds City Council, Department for Transport, Network Rail and HS2 Ltd. As part of this we need to agree as soon as possible a joint set of

objectives for this work, for example economic and carbon, and outputs such as performance, capacity and modal shift.

This is also an opportunity to improve connectivity for our communities between Leeds and Sheffield such as Wakefield. We also need to understand to whom and how the budget is allocated and how we separate out the funding for the mass transit work. By working together, we can conclude, once and for all, the high-speed rail solution for Leeds to Sheffield and the connections onwards to East Midlands and London to restore business confidence.

Certainly the 113 minute journey time from Leeds to London stated in the IRP falls way below our expectations and, as part of the study you've progressed, we will look to achieve a marked improvement on this performance.

- Bradford and Calder Valley:** Bradford needs a comprehensive set of proposals to address the long-standing weaknesses in its rail infrastructure. Making a step-change in the rail connectivity of Bradford requires more than the proposal to electrify the existing line to Leeds. We urgently need to give clarity to people in Bradford about how they can connect with the rest of the north. A new city centre through station in Bradford will slash journey times to Leeds by more than half and to Manchester by two-thirds, taking thousands of vehicles off the roads, and bring 6.7 million people within a 35-minute journey of the central area. This is not just about journey times, it's about regeneration and the transformation of the city's fortunes.

I note your commitment to upgrade and electrify the Leeds–Bradford section of the Calder Valley Line. The Government needs to clarify and confirm its position immediately regarding the onward electrification to Halifax and Manchester – a priority corridor identified for electrification since 2013.

- Leeds station:** We know that passenger numbers at Leeds Station continue to increase and are already close to, or on occasion higher than, pre-pandemic levels. We can't let another review stop the much-needed work at Leeds Station. We must work together to agree and progress the proposals to increase the track and pedestrian capacity urgently needed in the next few years to provide long-term resilience for Leeds. It is widely recognised in the rail industry that this lack of resilience at Leeds has significant implications for the wider regional and national rail network. It is vital that we address this pressing issue now and not be distracted by yet another study.
- TransPennine Route Upgrade:** While your commitment on TRU is welcomed, the proposed upgrades, especially the new line alignment between Manchester and Marsden, will cause significant disruption to our communities over an extended period of time. The Government needs to set out urgently the scale and extent of this disruption and the mitigation proposed for towns such as Huddersfield. For example, Government needs to explain how it plans to electrify the line through the tunnels at Huddersfield and Gledholt whilst maintaining existing rail services on that route. Furthermore, in the context of the stated 33-minute journey time between Leeds and Manchester, we would like more detail on the assumed stopping patterns at intermediate stations such as



Mirfield, Dewsbury, Batley and Morley, to ensure that the IRP meets local as well as inter-city rail needs. It's also unclear what improvements there will be to address capacity constraints east of Leeds station. The IRP comes on the back of further disappointment concerning the failure to support improvements to the Penistone Line between Sheffield and Huddersfield through the Levelling Up Fund, emphasising the failure to address regional connectivity.

5. **ECML:** While there is commitment on ECML, we need to understand your plan for platform lengthening at Bradford and your plan to tackle capacity and resilience issues at Leeds. People in places like Wakefield need to be reassured that they can benefit from IRP now HS2 is not there to free up existing lines.
6. **Mass Transit in West Yorkshire:** We note the Prime Minister's statement in the IRP to provide "£200m of immediate funding to plan the project (Mass Transit) and start building it...". We understand that this is part funded through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and part funded through the £100m mentioned in the IRP that is also to be used to consider how to enable high speed trains to reach Leeds. As mentioned above we want to work in partnership with you on considering the high speed services to Leeds and think it's crucial we quickly define how this budget is managed. Once we have clarification on the additional funding available, I propose that we agree a joint timetable for the delivery of the project. We must ensure that we have a seamless and timely approach to delivery, which sees the first line in operation within this decade. Securing the full support of DfT and wider Government to the detailed timetable and co-produced delivery will be essential to achieving this.
7. **Accountability:** I am also very concerned about the future role of Mayors and local Leaders through TfN in the decision-making of all these important schemes. How can we guarantee that government will not renege on commitments in the IRP and ensure the schemes address local economic and social needs?

My disappointment and concern at the proposals set out in the IRP and other recent decisions extend significantly beyond the seven points I have outlined above, but, given the urgency of the issues, I ask that our offices work together to find a time to meet so we can start to address these pressing matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tracy Brabin", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire