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Dear Martin and Jonathan,

**REF. SECTION 18 PASSENGER TRACK ACCESS APPLICATIONS:
(ALLIANCE RAIL HOLDINGS - GREAT NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY)**

I write in response to the consultation by Alliance Rail Holdings and Network Rail on the track access applications for paths on the West Coast Main Line to West Yorkshire. This response is primarily concerned with the impact on West Yorkshire, however it is also written with the wider Leeds City Region in mind.

The Leeds City Region Transport Strategy (<http://www.leedscityregion.gov.uk/areas-of-work/transport/transport-strategy/>) highlights the importance to the City Region's economy of good cross-Pennine rail links to the Manchester City Region, the wider North West as well as links to the Greater South East and London.

The Yorkshire and Humber and Northern RUSs also both highlight the rising demand for rail travel and the gaps in connectivity and provision across the Pennines, from our towns into Leeds as well as across to Manchester as a result of the changing economic geography of the north of England.

The Northern Hub scheme has demonstrated the economic and environmental benefits to be had from its implementation. Metro and the wider Leeds City Region are very supportive of the Northern Hub scheme and welcome the Government's announcement earlier this year to fund construction of the

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Ordsall Curve. Along with the existing work to improve line speeds across the Pennines, this will help enable faster and more frequent journeys between Manchester and Leeds primarily via the Huddersfield line. There are significant benefits for the Caldervale line as well, should the full Northern Hub scheme be funded through CP5.

The Alliance Rail Holdings proposal will help achieve part of the City Region strategy, namely improved links to London and the South East, as well as to the North West and in the case of the Caldervale line proposal, improved links to Manchester. Metro welcomes any operator who comes forward with proposals to help fill such gaps in rail provision and Alliance Rail is no exception to this.

Metro believes Alliance's proposal to be attractive to West Yorkshire for the following reasons:

- The provision of much needed additional rail capacity.
- The provision of modern, better quality rolling stock which will attract more customers to rail generally.
- The provision of more direct links to London from West Yorkshire and particularly from Bradford, the Calder Valley, Dewsbury and Huddersfield.
- The provision of better connectivity between West Yorkshire and the North West, as well as to the Midlands (Crewe in particular is a key rail hub which is currently difficult to access from West Yorkshire) and destinations in the Greater South East on the WCML such as Milton Keynes which are currently difficult to reach by rail.
- As the Executive of the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority, Metro would wish to see Alliance Rail become a member of the West Yorkshire Ticketing Company. Initial discussions with Alliance Rail indicate they are willing to explore this further. This is very important to Metro as it would mean that holders of West Yorkshire wide multi-modal tickets would be able to use the new services provided by Alliance Rail.

Despite the positive light in which this application is held by Metro, I would however like to highlight some key areas of concern that I would wish to be addressed as part of the consultation:

1. The Northern Hub

This application should not hinder implementation of the Northern Hub service pattern proposals such as a 5th train per hour between Leeds and Manchester via Huddersfield, the improved journey times for this service, as well as the improved connectivity for the Caldervale line with direct services from Bradford and Halifax to Manchester Airport. We would also not wish to see this application hinder best use of other planned infrastructure improvements in CP4 or CP5 to local and regional rail.

2. Development of a standard pattern timetable for the Caldervale line:

Calderdale and Bradford Councils, in conjunction with Metro, have recently commissioned a study through consultants Arup to evaluate options to improve the rail offer on the Caldervale line. A number of

stakeholders including Alliance Rail Holdings, had an involvement in the study. The main objectives for the public authorities served by the route are to facilitate lower carbon economic growth in the towns and cities along the line.

Arup's proposed solution is the introduction of a standard pattern timetable along the route with a more obvious service split between local, semi-fast and fast trains on the route. The proposal includes the introduction of a second "fast" service per hour between Leeds and Manchester. Whilst there are numerous question marks about how and when this can be delivered, particularly in the current financial climate, the broad principal of a standard pattern timetable along the route with greater delineation between service types is something that is aspired to by the public authorities along the route and will be something that we seek to develop through the re-franchising process in the coming year or so.

It may be that Alliance Rail's proposed services could well form part of this improved service offer and indeed, if this could be done with no public investment then it is to be welcomed. However, Metro would not wish to see the Alliance Rail's proposed services along the Caldervale line hinder the eventual development of a standard pattern timetable and better delineation of service type in future. Metro would much rather that Alliance's proposed timetable for its services on the route are actually part of the solution, rather than work against it. To this end, Metro would like to see Network Rail bring forward track and signalling enhancements on the Caldervale line for implementation sooner than CP6 and ideally, to allow the Alliance Rail application to fit in with our plans for the Caldervale line.

- 3. Financial sustainability of rail franchises:** This application should not detract from the general financial sustainability of local and inter-regional rail services in and to/from West Yorkshire.

The McNulty Value for Money Review has some far reaching implications for local and regional rail in the north of England. The DfT's forthcoming response in the Rail White Paper in the Autumn will no doubt also have implications for rail in the north, and is also likely to consult on devolving some rail powers and therefore financial accountability from the DfT to PTEs and/or Local Authorities.

The local rail franchise in the north is heavily dependent on public subsidy, the budget for which in the future could possibly rest with a new devolved body involving Metro and other PTEs. Given the broader public/societal good that such services provide, Metro would not wish to see the Alliance Rail Holdings application abstract revenue from local services and so make them less financially viable. Indeed, our plan would be to make such services, as long as there is a good economic, social and environmental business case for them, more financially sustainable to ensure their longer term viability.

I accept that this letter is somewhat contradictory in that I express support for the Alliance proposals however at the same time also express concerns. It would be much easier to make an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed Alliance services on existing services, the Northern Hub proposals, and other future aspirations if more detail on the Alliance services could be provided.

I hope that you find these comments useful.

Yours sincerely,

James Nutter
Rail Manager