



Report of	Meeting	Date
Deputy Chief Executive	Central Lancashire Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Committee	10 November 2020

## **CENTRAL AND WEST LANCASHIRE RAIL STUDY**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To update Members on the Central and West Lancashire Rail Study as attached at Appendix 1.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. That the report be noted.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

3. South Ribble, Chorley and West Lancashire Borough Councils commissioned a high level study to investigate potential rail improvements within our boroughs. This study was inspired by the possible funding available for new rail interventions via the Restoring Your Railway Fund, and the collective desire of the three authorities to improve rail connectivity on the Ormskirk-Preston line and to consider options for a new rail station at Coppull on the West Coast Mainline. The recommended options shortlist focuses on potentially extending the Merseyrail service from Ormskirk to Burscough Bridge (in West Lancashire), i.e. re-opening the Burscough Curves, and alongside that improving the service between Burscough and Preston, including potential new stations at Midge Hall and Coote Lane (both in South Ribble). In the medium-term, the report also recommends considering further the proposal for a station at Coppull as capacity on the West Coast Mainline improves.

<b>Confidential report</b> Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
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### **BACKGROUND**

4. Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire Councils jointly commissioned consultants WSP to look into rail improvement options on the Preston to Ormskirk line, the Southport to Wigan line and the Preston to Wigan line. The study was a high level study reviewing past work on both lines and looking at what factors may have changed since then and which could justify the investment required to deliver improvements to junctions, the reopening of stations or the delivery of new station options.
5. The focus of the study was to look at how improvements could be delivered in Burscough to better connect the two lines which pass through this area, as well as options for the reopening of Midge Hall Station in South Ribble and Coppull station in Chorley. Additional station options in South Ribble and Chorley and tram options were also discussed by WSP and are presented in the final report.

## THE STUDY

### Current Position

6. The Study highlights that all 3 councils have declared a climate emergency and are looking at ways to reduce carbon emissions to meet the pledge of carbon neutrality by 2030. A key consideration in this is reducing the number of journeys by car, as transport is the largest contributor to carbon emissions nationally, contributing 40 % of overall emissions.
7. It is clear that existing rail infrastructure is not sufficient to offer a viable alternative to road as the primary means of travelling around the area, however as travel by rail produces less CO<sub>2</sub> than cars, it is clear that a modal shift is needed to help the councils achieve this aim.
8. The study highlights limitations with the current connections and potential areas to improve based on areas of known/planned growth and where the changes will improve the service offered to customers. It also identifies that there is a relationship between the population within 1 mile of a station, with larger populations showing greater usage of stations. This can be seen with Chorley being the busiest station in the area next to Preston. Furthermore, park and ride stations are also shown to increase the use of the trains, with Buckshaw Parkway being significantly busier than other stations in the area (except Chorley and Preston) with data for 2019 showing this to rank no.3 in passenger numbers in the study area with passenger numbers close to 367,000 compared to a population of 5,000, this station attracted more passengers than Leyland and Wigan Wall gate.
9. The study also reviews the existing highways network and notes that increased congestion, and slower journey times are expected in the coming years due to population increases predicted for the area, even with planned and delivered highways improvements, unless more sustainable modes of transport such as trains and buses can be improved.
10. Previous studies on the lines are as below
  - Burscough 2009 and 2015, both now considered out of date,
  - Midge Hall 2019, did consider the implications for potential demand of recent and planned developments in the area
  - Coppull 2015 as part of wider work by LCC, this concluded the works required to the west Costs Main Line (WCML) would be too expensive to make this station viable.

### Study Findings

11. A SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) of the current network has been carried out and the results of the report present Options for improving the existing rolling stock (greener/cleaner trains), improving the current routes offered and potential for reopening stations/or completely new stations. The opportunities identified are greater for expansion of services in South Ribble and West Lancashire than Chorley due to the financial costs associated with works in Coppull. Tram /train options are also considered and are of most relevance to South Ribble and Preston, with lines looked at around Penwortham and New Longton.
12. New stations are proposed in a number of locations as indicated below and at Appendix 1. These have been identified to reduce gaps between existing stopping points and could help to open up land for redevelopment. The station locations proposed may also have potential for park and ride. These are:
  - Burscough Junction – to connect Preston and Ormskirk line to the Southport to Wigan line or create a walking link between the two
  - Wymott and Garth to serve the prisons
  - Re opening Midge Hall

- Parker Lane/New Longton
- Coote Lane

13. Of the Options presented, following qualitative assessment, Burscough curves improvements and re-opening of Midge Hall performed better than others and are identified as the main options to pursue in the short term. This is down to the cost of delivering the improvements and the known developments in the area which justify expectations of higher passenger numbers to recoup the costs associated with initial delivery.

14. **Tram- train options** towards Preston present a number of options for creating a much improved Lancashire network. This is because tram-trains are able to leave the railway alignment and run along the streets, opening up potential for routes which trains alone cannot reach. The report present 3 options (Appendix 1, page 21) as discussed below.

- 3 (a) Existing rail alignment – using existing rail, no on street running and would need to align with existing network. Option for a new station around Penwortham
- 3 (b) new Longton and Penwortham way – new service line to serve Penwortham and approach the City Centre of Preston from the west.



- 3 (c) Lostock Hall and Avenham – Achieved through rebuilding old chord near Coote lane and Farington old line from the east of Lostock Hall to Avenham. This would serve existing and new developments in the Lostock Hall area.



15. **New Stations** The study also identifies where new stations could be considered, for South Ribble, the study highlights potential for reopening of Midge Hall Station as well as considering new stations at Parker Lane/ New Longton and Coote Lane.

16. Midge Hall station is still in existence; however, it has not been a stopping point since 1961. The findings of the study note the recent expansion in development around this area since that time, and recent permissions at the Test track site could justify the cost of reopening this station. There is also strong public support for this to happen.
17. Parker Lane /New Longton – this option would be to provide a new station to residents around the A582 Tank Roundabout linking Penwortham, and west Leyland which are all poorly served by rail. This station options also has the potential to offer park and ride which has been particularly successful at Buckshaw.
18. The final option, Coote Lane, is 3.5km from Preston and near to potential new housing allocations. It would also service existing populations around Penwortham, and Kingsfold.
19. Of the Options presented, following qualitative assessment, Burscough curves improvements and re-opening of Midge Hall performed better than others and are identified as the main options to pursue in the short term. This is down to the cost of delivering the improvements and the known developments in the area which justify expectations of higher passenger numbers to recoup the costs associated with initial delivery.
20. Coppull Station is looked at with 3 potential locations considered as shown below. For any station to be delivered here, significant work is required to improve the West Coast Main Line (WCML) which has previously ruled out reopening this station, this is the most costly of the options assessed through the study. However, improvements to the WCML will be required to deliver HS2 and this could offer the opportunity to develop a station on a spur away from the main track as is the case at Euxton Balshaw Lane. The track in this area could only extend to 3 tracks not 4, so any station serving Coppull would be a single platform station with an island configuration. However, Coppull alone would not support the costs needed to develop this line, it would either need the investment from HS2, or if it is not provided by the rail industry, justification for development would come from demand for higher passenger numbers from surrounding areas such as Charnock and Standish resulting from increased housing delivery in this area. A park and ride facility may also assist in attracting higher number as has been the case on Buckshaw Village aided by an increase in local housing delivery.
21. Coppull Options (Appendix 1 pages 26-27):  
Option A: Coppull North by Coppull Ring Mill, north of the village centre towards Charnock Richard  
Option B: Coppull Central – original station location, Spendmore Lane/Station road  
Option C: Coppull South - Chapel Lane, south of the village centre
22. Coppull South (Option C) is likely to be the most feasible station option of the 3 presented, and land has been suggested around this location for future housing growth. This option could also offer the potential for park and ride which has shown already at Buckshaw to be a popular option for commuters.



## Next Steps

26. The Study has been shared with planning and transport colleagues in Lancashire County Council (LCC) working on the Transport Masterplan for the area. Further discussions will be had with the County to set out which options should be taken forward into the Masterplan.
27. These options will be addressed directly with LCC and the operators to look into the feasibility of these further.
28. The MP for West Lancashire is already engaged in supporting developments to improve connections in Burscough and raising the profile of this option with full support of all local councils and MPs covering Southport, Chorley, South Ribble and Preston.

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