

Midlands Rail Hub

On track for delivery



September 2024



On a grey, overcast day in February, Midlands Connect joined colleagues from West Midlands Rail Executive, Chiltern Railways, Network Rail and the Department for Transport at Birmingham’s Moor Street station to announce £123m to kickstart the detailed design work of the scheme. Midlands Rail Hub is our flagship project and the progress we have made, as a partnership, has been fantastic.

This first wave of funding would enable design work to begin on this transformational project to create space for extra services. This includes preparing detailed designs for the infrastructure improvements required, finalising operating plans for the new services, while continuing to move the rest of the programme forward.

The centrepiece of the scheme is a proposal for two new chords which would allow trains to access Birmingham Moor Street from the South West and East Midlands, together with additional platforms at Moor Street and Snow Hill Stations. Further afield, we upgrade the station at Kings Norton which provides space for more trains to call there.

When delivered in full, the hub would see services on several major routes increase by between 50% and 100%. Birmingham’s Cross-City line would be given a ‘turn-up-and-go’ service with a train every 10 minutes.

Our plans would double the number of trains from Birmingham to each of Hereford, Cardiff, Leicester and towards Nottingham, while adding a third hourly train to Bristol.

This project is now at a key point and the name of this report is apt; on track to delivery and we are keen to pick this up and progress, at pace. We hope you can help us to promote, support and advocate for Midlands Rail Hub in the weeks and months ahead.



Sir John Peace Chair, Midlands Connect



Maria Machancoses CEO, Midlands Connect

Executive summary

This document outlines the work that Midlands Connect, Network Rail, the Department for Transport and WMRE are doing to progress the Midlands Rail Hub, with the aim of benefitting local people, our environment and our economy sooner:

More rail journeys

Midlands Rail Hub provides capacity for up to 100 additional trains per day to operate into and out of Birmingham’s Moor Street Station, to the Midlands and beyond.

Shorter journey times

As well as running more trains, Midlands Rail Hub allows us to run some services faster, for example saving over 10 minutes on a typical rail journey from Hereford into Birmingham.

Boost economic growth

The programme delivers value for money, with the benefits outweighing the costs.

Environmentally friendly

Each person moved by rail instead of by diesel/petrol vehicle creates 76% less CO2.

Safeguarding jobs

Over the course of the seven-year programme, more than 12,750 roles would be created over its lifetime.

Supported by the public

Nearly three quarters of Birmingham residents (73%) believe a more frequent Cross-City Line service would encourage them to travel by rail. Midlands Rail Hub is most likely to encourage people to take the train for leisure, a concert, or meet friends for lunch in Birmingham (76%), Leicester (77%), Hereford (82%) and Worcester (84%).

Midlands Rail Hub’s strategic aims are to:

Improve
customer
experience

Provide better
access to
opportunities

Provide a
network that
encourages
economic
growth

Enable a
sustainable
future

Service improvements

Midlands Rail Hub West

Birmingham - Hereford (+1 train per hour)	
Calling at	Journey time savings (mins)
Bromsgrove	4
Droitwich Spa	5 - 6
Worcester Foregate Street	5 - 6
Great Malvern	6 - 8
Hereford	12 - 13

Birmingham - Bristol (+1 train per hour)	
Calling at	Journey time savings (mins)
Cheltenham Spa	-
Bristol Parkway	-
Bristol Temple Meads	-

Birmingham - Cardiff (+1 train per hour)	
Calling at	Journey time savings (mins)
Worcestershire Parkway	-
Cheltenham Spa	-
Gloucester	1 - 2
Newport	4
Cardiff Central	4 - 5

Midlands Rail Hub East

Birmingham - Leicester (+2 trains per hour)	
Calling at	Journey time savings (mins)
Nuneaton	-
Leicester	-

Birmingham - Burton/Derby/Nottingham	
Calling at	Journey time savings (mins)
TBC	TBC

What is Midlands Rail Hub?

History in the making

Part of the Midlands Engine Rail programme, Midlands Rail Hub is the region's biggest and most ambitious rail improvement scheme - a £1.75bn project for faster, better and more frequent connections across the Midlands.

The concept of constructing two new links (or chords) into Birmingham Moor Street station was born in the 1990s, driven by a desire to create space for more trains to move into and out of central Birmingham. However, it wasn't until 2015 when work on the scheme really picked up pace, when it was identified as a priority both by Network Rail in its Route Study and Midlands Connect in its first Transport Strategy.

Historically, turning rail projects from concept to reality has been a long and frustrating process. Midlands Connect is keen to break this cycle by securing the future of this project now and planning for its delivery in the future. Since its inception as the region's Sub-national Transport Body in 2015, Midlands Connect has worked with local leaders, authorities, Network Rail, West Midlands Rail Executive and the Department for Transport to develop and progress Midlands Rail Hub, focussing on the benefits of east-west connectivity across the Midlands. But also acknowledging the opportunity to provide better access to HS2 by routing more trains into Moor Street Station, which sits adjacent to the new Curzon Street Station.



As well as gaining political consensus for the scheme, the project managed to secure £20m funding to develop the outline business case in March 2020. Midlands Rail Hub was also listed as a transport priority in the 2019 Conservative Party Manifesto and in Government's Integrated Rail Plan, published in November 2021.

Making the case for infrastructure investment

The Office of Rail and Road reported a total of 1.61 billion rail passenger journeys in Great Britain from 2023 to 2024, a 16% increase on the 1.38 billion journeys in the previous year.

This research underlines the need for investment in upgrading and revitalising rail infrastructure, providing increased capacity to meet both current and future demands based on population growth, the need to encourage sustainable transport and to shift road traffic to rail through the provision of high quality, connected and modern services.

The impact of Midlands Rail Hub

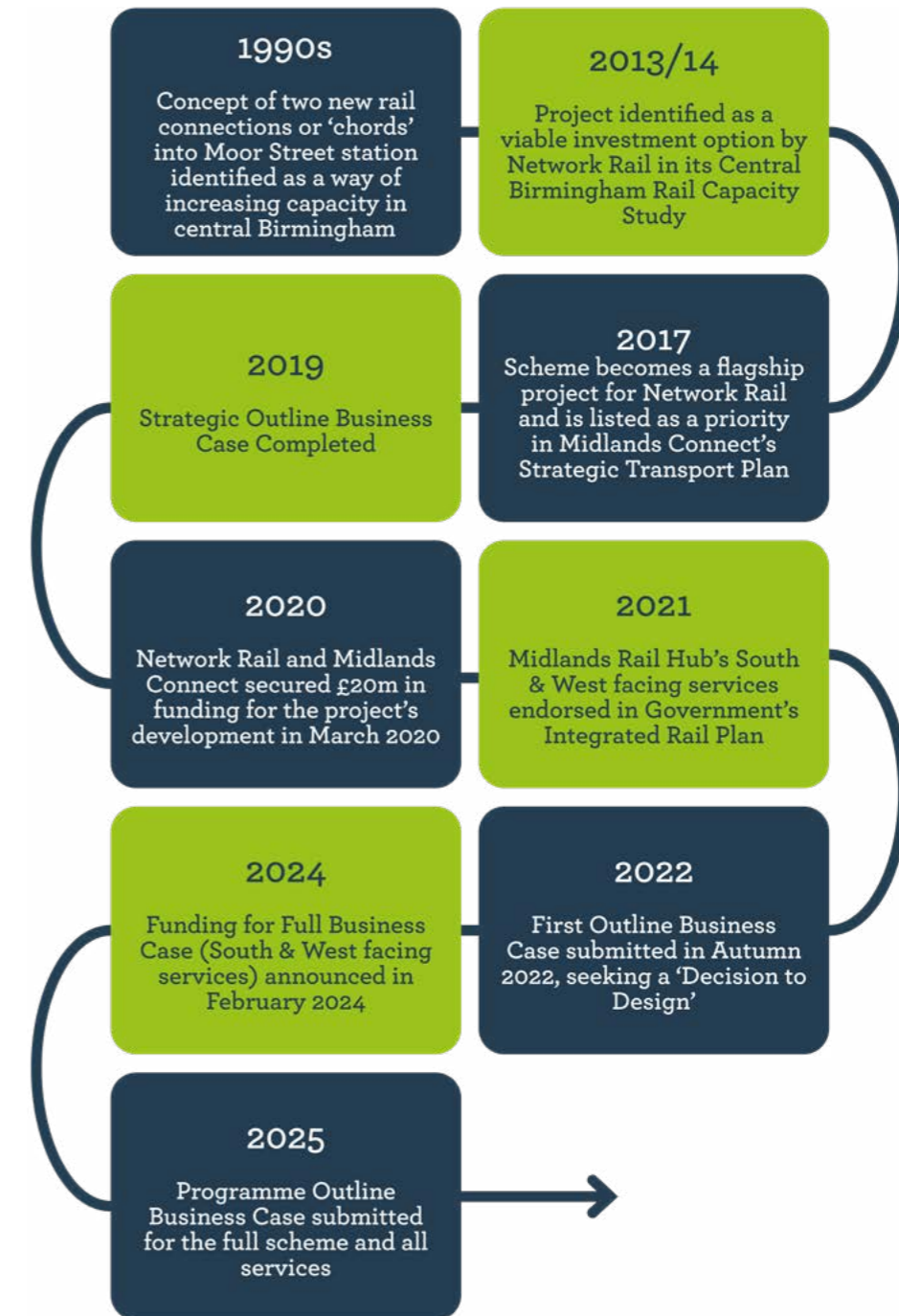
Midlands Rail Hub would benefit more than 50 stations, which between them reach more than 7 million people, including those living in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Hereford, Malvern, Worcester, Tamworth, Burton, Derby, Nottingham, Nuneaton and Leicester.

At the moment, around half of the Chiltern Railways services from London Marylebone terminate at Moor Street Station. With Midlands Rail Hub in place, all Chiltern trains can run to Snow Hill alongside any future increase in local services, giving a consistent half-hourly service to London's Marylebone right throughout the day. In addition, platforms would either be added or reinstated at Snow Hill, Moor Street and Kings Norton.

We would see a doubling of the number of trains from Birmingham to Leicester (from 2 to 4); a doubling from Birmingham to Hereford (from 1 to 2), a doubling from Birmingham to Cardiff (from 1 to 2); an extra train each hour from Birmingham to Bristol (from 2 to 3), and more services towards Derby and Nottingham. In addition, we can raise the frequency of the busy Cross City Line from four trains each hour to six.



Our work so far



Next steps

Midlands Connect is working with the Department for Transport, Network Rail and West Midlands Rail Executive to progress the Full Business Case for the West-facing section at pace.

We will be coming back to Government in 2025 to seek funding to allow the entirety of Midlands Rail Hub to be developed to Full Business Case, including the section from Birmingham to Derby & Nottingham which was expected to be served by HS2 but now forms a key component of Midlands Rail Hub. The bigger, broader, scheme is something we wholeheartedly support and we are keen to move to delivery as soon as possible.

The scheme: at a glance



The scheme: in detail

Proposed interventions

Midlands Rail Hub would require the following infrastructure upgrades for each package:

Midlands Rail Hub West	Midlands Rail Hub East
Snow Hill platform 4	Moor Street platforms A & B (east side)
Moor Street platform 5	Bordesley viaduct widening
Bordesley West chord	Bordesley East chord
Kings Norton - Barnt Green	Water Orton remodelling
Stoke Works junction	Freight loops between Nuneaton and Leicester
Malvern Wells turnback facility	Kingsbury arrival line
Ledbury - Shelwick partial double-tracking	Burton-upon-Trent layout
	Elford goods loop improvement

As we progress into the detailed designs stage of the project, we have split the scheme in half to allow us to progress it, at pace. The two parts of the scheme are East and West. Midlands Connect expects the west-facing part of the scheme to open in the early 2030s with the east-facing part following by the mid-2030s.



Midlands Rail Hub West	
Train service specification	+1 TPH Birmingham - Worcester +1 TPH Birmingham to Cardiff +1 TPH Birmingham to Bristol Reinstate 6 TPH on Cross-City Line Divert Camp Hill services to Moor Street
Infrastructure	Extra platforms at Snow Hill and Moor Street Bordesley west chord Kings Norton to Barnt Green upgrade
Business case status	£123mil received for Full Business Case, including design of the east-facing parts of the scheme in Central Birmingham
Next milestones	Full Business Case complete in 2028 Transport and Works Act Order application 2028
Entry into service	Early 2030s

The primary service changes delivered by MRH West are:

1. An additional train per hour between Birmingham and Bristol
2. An additional train per hour between Birmingham and Cardiff via Gloucester
3. An additional train per hour between Birmingham and Hereford via Worcester
4. Two extra trains per hour to form a core six train per hour Cross City Line service, linking:

Redditch	Bromsgrove	Alvechurch	Barnt Green	Longbridge
Northfield	Kings Norton	Bourneville	Selly Oak	University
Five Ways	Birmingham New Street	Duddeston	Aston	Gravelly Hill
Erdington	Chester Road	Wylde Green	Sutton Coldfield	Four Oaks
Butlers Lane	Blake Street	Shenstone	Lichfield City	Lichfield Trent Valley

5. Rerouting of the planned two trains per hour from Kings Norton to Birmingham New Street (Camp Hill) service to instead run to Moor Street.

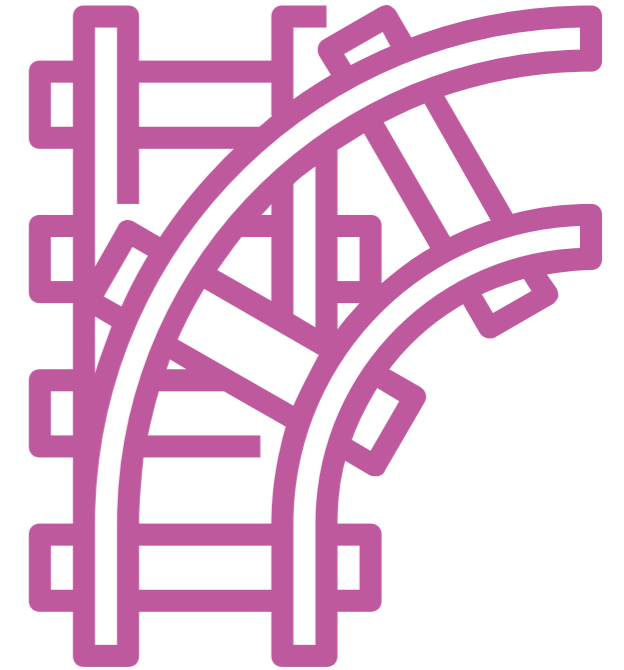
*£123m Full Business Case funding currently excludes design work west of Bromsgrove.

Midlands Rail Hub East

Train service specification	+2 TPH fast trains Birmingham - Leicester Additional trains from Birmingham towards Derby and Nottingham
Infrastructure	Extra platforms at Moor Street Bordesley East chord Widening of the Bordesley Viaduct Water Orton remodelling New freight loops in each direction between Nuneaton and Leicester Kingsbury arrival line Burton-upon-Trent layout Elford goods loop improvement Other measures between Birmingham and Nottingham (TBC)
Business case status	Outline Business Case submitted to Government in March 2024 for extra Birmingham - Leicester services
Next milestones	Funding request to be made in 2025 as part of programme-wide Outline Business Case
Entry into service	Mid 2030s

Added to the benefits above the primary service changes delivered by MRH East are:

1. An additional 2 TPH between Birmingham and Leicester, giving an overall service of 2 fast trains and 2 slow trains.
2. Additional services from Birmingham towards Derby and Nottingham.



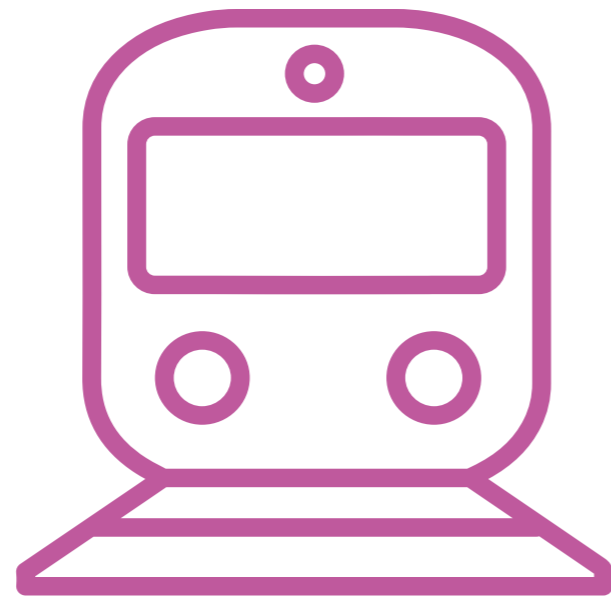
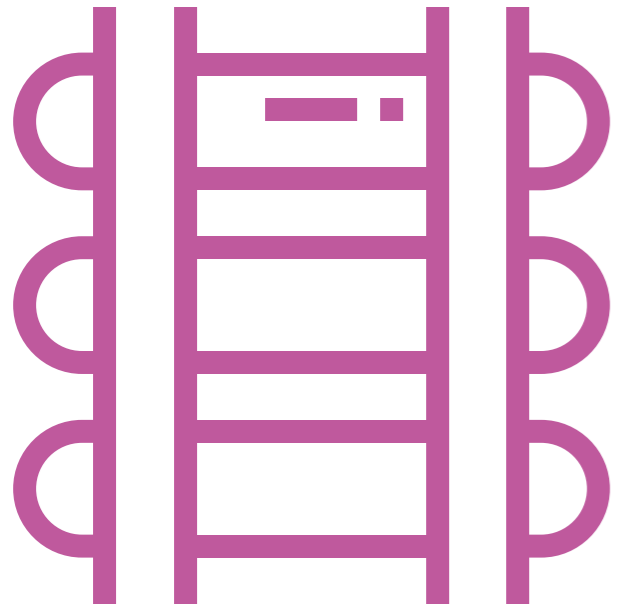
Station interventions

Reinstating platform 4 at Birmingham Snow Hill station

Improvements at Birmingham Snow Hill station would allow more passengers to alight or disembark in the centre of the city's business district. After being repurposed as a temporary terminus for the tram (which no longer calls there), its fourth platform now lies unused. Repurposing the platform for heavy rail would bring numerous benefits, improving connectivity to Birmingham city centre and increasing the resilience of the rail network, especially when there are hold ups or blockages elsewhere on the line. Our analysis suggests that reinstating this platform would bring 350,000 more passengers into Birmingham Snow Hill station every year, to the benefit of local businesses and employers.

Improving Kings Norton

If you've been to Kings Norton Station in recent years, you'll know that the middle platforms have long been disused. The station would be rebuilt, with a new arrangement that means it is served by local Camp Hill trains towards Birmingham via new stations at Pineapple Road, Kings Heath and Moseley, in addition to a 6 TPH service towards Birmingham City Centre via University. Therefore, in the future, this becomes a really busy and important junction between the two routes.





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