



Response To North East Local Transport Plan Consultation

By email to HaveYourSay@northeast-ca.gov.uk

23rd January 2025

1. Introduction

a) This is SENRUG's response to the North East Local Transport Plan public consultation. The plan was published on 1st November 2024 and is currently available on the North East Combined Authority website at <https://www.northeast-ca.gov.uk/localtransportplan>. There are 3 separate documents: the summary ("Delivering Greener Transport that Works for All"), The Plan itself and the Delivery Plan. Responses are required by **26th January 2025**.

b) SENRUG is The South East Northumberland Rail User Group, an unincorporated voluntary organisation that promotes rail travel and campaigns for better rail services in, within, to, from and through South East and East Northumberland, representing the interests of both existing and potential rail travellers in the area. By 'potential', SENRUG means those who would use rail services if only the trains went where they want to go, at the time they want to go, at a price they can afford, and in a clean, safe, secure, accessible and easy to understand manner.

c) It therefore follows that SENRUG's response deals primarily with rail aspects of the plan (including Metro and rail – bus integration) and covers South East and East Northumberland as well as connecting and nearby services in the City of Newcastle and North Tyneside.

d) As of January 2025, SENRUG has 184 members and 9 corporate members and 1698 followers on Facebook.

e) In general SENRUG welcomes the Local Transport Plan as it incorporates several, but not all, of the developments SENRUG has been campaigning for. SENRUG believes that the new Mayor-led combined authority for the North East has the opportunity to go even further. Many of SENRUG's proposals are low cost yet would make an enormous difference to the travelling public. A small number of proposals are of more significant cost but build on aspirations already mooted in the Transport Plan.

f) SENRUG's comments refer mainly to the separate Delivery Plan and are grouped into the following order:

- i. Section 2: New Passenger Rail Services
- ii. Section 3: Enhancements to Existing Rail Services

- iii. Section 4: New Stations
- iv. Section 5: Rail Infrastructure Improvements
- v. Section 6: Rail – Metro – Bus Integration
- vi. Section 7: Station Facilities
- vii. Section 8: River Crossings

g) The Transport Plan lists 5 overall objectives (A fairer North East, A greener North East, A connected North East, An international North East, and A successful North East), and 5 different outcomes that any proposed intervention will support (Planning journeys and supporting customers, Ticketing and fares, Reach and resilience of infrastructure, safety [especially for women and girls] and Connections between different types of transport). For each SENRUG suggestion, the related overall objective(s) outcome type is stated. References to the Delivery Plan are also highlighted.

2. New Passenger Rail Services

2.1 Newcastle – Berwick Local Service (Suggested delivery by 2027) *(A Connected North East, A Greener North East)*

a) **Intervention NO15: Delivery Plan page 104** calls for passenger services between Newcastle and Berwick to be developed and SENRUG welcome the proposed delivery timeframe of by 2027. Specifically SENRUG is calling for an hourly in each direction local service, calling at every station, thus significantly enhancing rail service at the north Northumberland communities of Pegswood, Widdrington, Acklington and Chathill, whose hapless residents currently have a wholly insufficient service of just one morning train to, and one evening train from Newcastle (plus feeder workings).

b) A Feasibility Study has already been undertaken on this service by leading rail consultants Systra. The Study was funded jointly by Northumberland County Council, Northern Trains and SENRUG, and concluded the service is technically feasible (provided electric trains are used, due to their faster acceleration) and would be commercially viable.

c) The proposed service also accords with the desire to reduce car journeys and traffic congestion in Northumberland's Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as it makes many north Northumberland communities accessible by train for leisure purposes (including leisure travellers wishing to transport bikes).

d) SENRUG now believes this service should run in addition to the existing hourly local service between Carlisle (due to be cut back to Newcastle from December 2025) and Morpeth, to facilitate:

- i. Doubling (as a minimum) of the train service at Cramlington from 1 to 2 trains per hour each way, and
- ii. Extension of the Newcastle – Morpeth local service to Bedlington, thus a separate (electric) service is needed to run from Newcastle to Berwick.

e) Once the Newcastle – Berwick local service is running, new stations should be built at Belford (**Intervention NO14: Delivery Plan 135**) and Beal for Holy Island. A direct bus connecting with trains should be established between Chathill and Seahouses. This could subsequently be upgraded to a tram or light rail route as the former rail alignment remains intact. A new station at Benton East in the south, at the point where the line crosses the Metro, should be built to permit interchange from north Northumberland with Metro services to The Airport, Northumberland Park, The Coast and Gosforth (see Sections 2.4 and 4.2).

f) SENRUG believes Network Rail's bias to allocate available capacity for long distance services (eg London – Edinburgh) which offer little benefit to the North East, as is the case with the proposed December 2025 timetable, should be robustly challenged, and Network Rail should be mandated to build the infrastructure required to meet local and regional service aspirations such as this requirement.

2.2 Morpeth – Bedlington (Suggested delivery by 2027) (A Connected North East, A Fairer North East)

a) The local rail service between Newcastle and Morpeth should be extended along the existing freight line to Bedlington, connecting with the Northumberland Line. This is preferable to trains sitting idle in the Morpeth siding before returning to Newcastle, as occurs at present. It would reduce the public transport journey time between Bedlington station and Morpeth from approximately 30 to just 10 minutes. Northern Railway have advised SENRUG they are already looking at establishing this service due to the obvious commercial benefits with very little additional operating cost, but there should be pressure from the Combined Authority to ensure they do so.

b) Whilst not essential for the opening of the service, eventually a section of approximately 500 metres of double track from Barrington Lane to Bedlington Station should be signalled for trains to run in either direction. This would allow trains from Morpeth to Bedlington Station to proceed back to Morpeth from the same platform at Bedlington, without needing to cross the Bedlington South level crossing, move in to the siding and then back across the level crossing to the opposite platform. This saves 2 level crossing closures per train movement, cuts time off the operational schedule, and eliminates any conflict between trains from Morpeth with southbound passenger or freight trains on the Northumberland Line.

c) SENRUG believes that once the service is running successfully, a new intermediate station at Choppington should be created. This would be a simple single platform intermediate station serving both West Bedlington and Scotland Gate, the latter area having one of the lowest Local Super-Economic output Area (LSOA) rankings of 28 (out of 1 to 197 – 2015 data).

2.3 Ashington - Woodhorn – Newbiggin (Suggested delivery by 2027) (A Connected North East, A Fairer North East)

a) The [Delivery Plan \(page 77\)](#) calls for additional stations and extensions for the Northumberland Line by 2032 but (as far as SENRUG can tell) there is no specific detail as to what these extensions should be, or an intervention number.

b) SENRUG believes one of the extensions should be from Ashington to Newbiggin-by-the-Sea with an intermediate station at the Woodhorn (adjacent to the Northumberland Museum of Mining & Country Life – one of Northumberland's premier tourist attractions). Woodhorn station would also serve Wansbeck Hospital and should additionally be a Park & Ride for the village communities of Linton, Lynemouth and Ellington and Cresswell. Extending the Northumberland Line to Newbiggin requires a short section of operational privately owned track to be acquired from the power station operator, and a new section of approximately 1.28 km of single track to be laid along the existing alignment from a point east of the A189 Spine Road into Newbiggin village centre, by the Sports Centre.

c) Proposed **Intervention NO09: Delivery Plan page 134** – (New Road to Newbiggin) should not be permitted to compromise the rail alignment

2.4 Airport – Northumberland Park – Newsham – Blyth Town Centre (Suggested delivery by 2032)
(*An International North East, A Successful North East*)

a) SENRUG requests a new Metro service be established between the Airport and Blyth Town Centre. This would use the existing Metro service line between Regent Centre and Longbenton, then continuing to Northumberland Park. From Northumberland Park, Metro trains would run on Northumberland Line tracks under battery power as far as Newsham. From Newsham, a new single track should be built along the former alignment for approximately 2.4 km into Blyth Town Centre, the new station being between the Community Hospital and Morrisons.

b) This proposal would significantly assist the regeneration of Blyth Town Centre, providing a direct link to the airport for access to jobs (as well as leisure), and also linking Blyth directly to Northumberland Park (instead of via a bus to Newsham). Passengers for Newcastle City Centre would change at Northumberland Park for Northumberland Line or Metro services.

c) The new Metro route should additionally include a station at Seghill, which SENRUG had originally campaigned for as part of the Northumberland Line project. The Seghill station could potentially serve Northumberland Line trains too, if not passengers for Northumberland Line services to Newcastle would change at Northumberland Park.

d) The proposal may require the doubling of currently single sections of the Northumberland Line from Newsham South to Seghill North (which should be done in conjunction with building the station at Seghill) and between Seghill South and a new interconnection with Metro tracks to the east of Northumberland Park station. See Section 5.3.

e) The proposal is a variance to **Intervention NT05, Delivery Plan page 104** which proposes an Airport to the Coast Metro service. Passengers from The Coast would change at any station between Northumberland Park and Longbenton for Airport services.

f) The proposal should be compared with the proposed £46m for **Blyth Relief Road: Delivery plan page 72**.

2.5 Ashington – Butterwell – Alnmouth (Suggested business case sign-off by 2032; delivery by 2040)
(*Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure, A Connected North East*)

The privately operated freight line between Ashington and Butterwell Junction should be re-connected to the Northumberland Line at Ashington, and have a north-east junction created Butterwell. This line, which could also be double-tracked, would then create an additional freight route between Benton Junction and Butterwell Junction via The Northumberland Line and the Ashington – Butterwell Line, avoiding the East Coast Main Line. It would additionally allow some passenger trains on the Northumberland Line to continue to Alnmouth or further north eg to Berwick. A proposed service pattern would be alternate Newcastle to Ashington trains going alternately to Newbiggin and Alnmouth, thus each route has an hourly service on weekdays (half-hourly as far as Ashington).

2.6 Northumberland Park – Cobalt – Silverlink – Percy Main

(Suggested business case sign-off by 2032; delivery by 2040)

(A Connected North East)

A new Metro route should be established between these stations, using the former rail alignment which remains intact. Prior to Northumberland Park, trains could run from Newcastle via Gosforth or from the Airport in the same way as described for the Airport to Blyth Town Centre route in Section 2.4. After Silverlink, on reaching the southern leg of the Metro Coast loop, trains could either turn west to run back to the City Centre, turn east to run through Percy Main station to Tynemouth (the station has capacity to re-instate an additional platform to terminate trains), or possibly continue south on a new route to the international passenger ferry terminal (possible station name “Royal Quays”).

2.7 Airport to Ponteland (Suggested delivery by 2040)

(A Connected North East)

There is the possibility to extend the Metro from the airport to Ponteland, along the former railway alignment, though a new route across the A696 close to the Airport access roundabout would need to be found. The proposed road improvement [NO01: Delivery Plan page 134](#) should not be permitted to compromise the potential rail route.

2.8 Ashington – Cambois – North Blyth (Suggested delivery by 2040 – earlier if develop possibilities justify it)

(A Fairer North East, A Connected North East)

Should it be required to facilitate industrial / commercial and housing development at Cambois, a new rail link could very easily be created between these stations using the existing freight lines. SENRUG recommends a Metro or very light rail solution. The proposal would significantly assist the economic regeneration of the area, making it attractive to further future employers and support housing developers.

3. Enhancements to Existing Rail Services

3.1 First & Last Trains (Suggested delivery by 2027)

(A Fairer North East, Safety of Women & Girls)

[Intervention CA04: Delivery Plan page 137](#) calls for improvements to first and last trains. Specifically SENRUG requests:

- i. A later train to Ashington, leaving Newcastle at approximately 23:15 every day of the week. The current last train at 22:15 is totally inadequate and prevents travel by train for theatre, concerts or sporting events in Newcastle from stations on the Northumberland Line.
- ii. A later train to Berwick, Alnmouth, Morpeth and Newcastle at approximately 23:15 from Edinburgh. The December 2025 delivers a train departing Edinburgh at 22:00 on Mondays to Fridays, which is welcome (current latest departs 21:00). But this 22:00 departure also needs to run on Saturdays, and there needs to be an even later departure from Edinburgh on Saturdays departing 23:00 or later, again to permit travel from Newcastle and Northumberland stations to attend theatre, concerts or sporting events in Edinburgh on Saturday nights. Train operators are currently prevented from running later Saturday night services by Network Rail who have a permanent blockade on train movements every Saturday evening, This situation appears unique to the lines south from Edinburgh, and does not for instance apply to lines north or west from

Edinburgh, or lines from Newcastle. Network Rail should be robustly challenged to release the route for late night Saturday services.

- iii. An earlier weekday train from Morpeth to Newcastle, departing Morpeth 0527 and calling at Cramlington and Manors, to arrive at Newcastle at 0548 or earlier. This would enable people to access connections at Newcastle for onward travel on the 05:56 or 06:05 LNER services to London (arrive 09:17 and 09:23 respectively), the 06:00 to Middlesbrough via Sunderland, the 06:20 to Carlisle via the Tyne Valley and the 06:22 to Reading via Birmingham.

3.2 Cramlington (Suggested delivery by 2027) (A Fairer North East, A Successful North East)

- a) **Intervention NO05: Delivery Plan page 127** calls for service frequency improvements at Cramlington. Specifically SENRUG believes this should be achieved by:
 - i. Introduction of the new hourly Newcastle – Berwick service, which would stop at Cramlington in addition to the current Newcastle – Morpeth service. See Section 2.1.
 - ii. All the TransPennine Express services between Newcastle and Edinburgh additionally stopping at Cramlington. There will be 8 such trains each way per day from December 2025, of which just one train, southbound only, currently serves Cramlington.
- b) These 2 initiatives would result in Cramlington having 2 or 3 trains each way per hour, creating new journey opportunities to Edinburgh, and providing access to jobs, education and the Cramlington emergency hospital from Alnmouth and Berwick.

3.3 LNER Trains at Morpeth and Berwick (Suggested delivery by 2027) (A Connected North East, A Fairer North East)

- a) The December 2025 timetable reduces the number of LNER services calling at Morpeth and Berwick (Morpeth sees all off-peak services withdrawn) for the alleged gain of cutting 10 minutes from the journey time between London and Edinburgh. SENRUG believes this does not outweigh the disbenefits of service reductions at Northumberland stations. Now we have good wifi on board trains, time on the train is not lost to business, whereas time having to change trains, often requiring 30 minutes or more, is time lost to business. SENRUG therefore believes the Combined Authority should use its powers and influence to re-instate the lost services at both stations at the earliest possibility.
- b) In particular, Morpeth loses its morning service to Aberdeen (currently departs 09:01 and arrives 13:05). The service will still run but will no longer call at Morpeth. Yet SENRUG understands there is a strong community of oil workers travelling from South East Northumberland via Morpeth to Aberdeen, who will in future find it difficult to travel by train. There is also a direct flight between Newcastle Airport and Aberdeen, but the objective of the December 2025 timetable is to move passengers from air to rail, not the other way round. SENRUG therefore requests the morning call on the LNER Aberdeen service is re-instated.
- c) LNER point to the fact that Morpeth is now served by an open-access operator (Lumo) providing services to London and Edinburgh, so LNER trains at Morpeth are no longer necessary. This argument is wholly disingenuous because:
 - i. Lumo does not serve intermediate stations such as Newark, Grantham or Peterborough so customers requiring these stations will need to change at Newcastle. As the local service to Newcastle is only hourly, this could add around an hour to journey times.

- ii. Lumo does not offer a first class service. Business people from Morpeth often wish to travel first class in order to work on the train.
- iii. For connections north of Edinburgh to Aberdeen, travelling via multiple-operators makes the journey significantly more expensive. Additionally, as the connecting service (for the morning train) is with Lumo, through first-class tickets will not be available, and there is the risk the heavily used Lumo train will be full, meaning the journey is not possible.
- iv. An open-access operator can amend, withdraw calls or withdraw entire services at any time and is not required to seek government approval to do so. This would leave Morpeth passengers high and dry. Moreover, government's own intentions towards open access operators is unclear, with speculation government will not renew their licences to allow continued operation when the current licences expires.

3.4 Re-Connection of Liverpool – Newcastle and Newcastle – Edinburgh TransPennine Express Services (Suggested delivery by 2027)
(A Connected North East, A Successful North East)

Both the DfT and TransPennine Express (now owned by the DfT) committed to providing direct services between Morpeth, Leeds and Manchester on an extended TPE route running from Edinburgh via Newcastle to Liverpool from December 2019. The service indeed commenced and ran for a few weeks before being withdrawn at the start of Covid, and has never been re-instated. Therefore, the TPE services running between Newcastle and Edinburgh should be re-connected to the Liverpool – Newcastle services, giving Northumberland stations a direct rail service to Manchester, and a significantly improved service to York and Leeds.

3.5 Re-Connection of Morpeth – Newcastle and Newcastle – Carlisle Services
 (Suggested delivery by 2027)
(A Connected North East)

These services are due to be disconnected from December 2025 and passengers from Morpeth and Cramlington wishing travel to Tyne Valley stations or vice versa will need to change at Newcastle. The reason for the disconnection is given as the new East Coast Main Line timetable, but in fact the lay-out of Newcastle station including the rail underpass to the south of the King Edward Bridge means it is possible for trains at Newcastle's platforms 5-8 to exit the station to the north and pass on to the Tyne Valley line without touching or crossing the tracks used for mainline services. SENRUG believes the real reason is that delays on the Tyne Valley line means that services from Carlisle are terminated short at Newcastle rather than proceeding on to Morpeth. Since there is normally a crew change at Newcastle, this difficulty can easily be overcome by holding a spare train unit at Newcastle that could be utilised if the incoming service from Carlisle is significantly delayed. Therefore, direct connection between Morpeth and Tyne Valley stations should be re-established at the earliest possibility, with Morpeth and Cramlington to MetroCentre being the first priority to re-establish access to employment opportunities, Hexham being the second (to re-connect the important market towns of Morpeth and Hexham) and onwards to Carlisle if possible.

3.6 Glasgow Services (Suggested delivery by 2027)
(A Connected North East, An international North East)

Noting the withdrawal of LNER services from Newcastle and Northumberland to Glasgow, SENRUG supports plans from TransPennine Express and Lumo to extend their services from North East England to Edinburgh on to Glasgow. Such services would additionally serve Haymarket which

provides better connectivity to Edinburgh Airport by tram, and these plans should therefore be supported by the Combined Authority. There are significantly more destinations that can be reached from Edinburgh Airport than Newcastle, and some destinations are significantly cheaper from Edinburgh. People use airports according to their required destination, so many people from Newcastle and Northumberland use Edinburgh Airport (and indeed many people from Scottish Borders use Newcastle Airport).

4. New Stations

4.1 New Stations on New Routes or New Services.

(A Fairer North East, A Connected North East)

The proposals for new routes and services mentioned in Section 2 includes provision of 13 new stations, listed below:

i. Belford	(See Section 2.1)	(Suggested delivery by 2027)
ii. Beal	(See Section 2.1)	(Suggested delivery by 2032)
iii. Choppington	(See Section 2.2)	(Suggested delivery by 2032)
iv. Woodhorn	(See Section 2.3)	(Suggested delivery by 2027)
v. Newbiggin-by-the-Sea	(See Section 2.3)	(Suggested delivery by 2027)
vi. Blyth Town Centre	(See Section 2.4)	(Suggested delivery by 2032)
vii. Seghill	(See Section 2.4)	(Suggested delivery by 2032)
viii. Cobalt	(See Section 2.6)	(Suggested delivery by 2040)
ix. Silverlink	(See Section 2.6)	(Suggested delivery by 2040)
x. Royal Quays	(See Section 2.6)	(Suggested delivery by 2040)
xi. Ponteland	(See Section 2.7)	(Suggested delivery by 2040)
xii. Cambois	(See Section 2.8)	(Suggested delivery by 2040*)
xiii. North Blyth	(See Section 2.8)	(Suggested delivery by 2040*)

* Or earlier if development opportunities justify

4.2 Benton East (Suggested delivery by 2040)

(A Connected North East, An International North East, A Successful North East)

A key interconnection station is proposed, provisional name Benton East, at the point where the East Coast Main Line heavy rail tracks cross the Metro tracks. Combined with the new Metro service from Blyth Town Centre to the Airport (see Section 2.4) it would allow interconnection between passengers travelling on local and regional trains on the East Coast Main Line Newcastle – Morpeth – Bedlington and Newcastle – Morpeth – Berwick routes and possibly the TPE route between Newcastle and Edinburgh to change on to the Metro routes to the Airport, Gosforth, Northumberland Park and Coast. No physical connection between the 2 rail systems is suggested. It provides a new rail route to the airport (for access to jobs as well as for airport passengers) from the north, and SENRUG believes would be considerably cheaper and offer better value for money than an entirely new Newcastle – Airport rail route that has been proposed previously.

4.3 Team Valley (Suggested delivery by 2040)

(A Connected North East)

Whilst outside SENRUG's main area of focus, a new station on the East Coast Main Line should be built at Team Valley, to greatly improve access to employment at the industrial estate and access to

the retail complex. The station could be provided by re-opening the Bensham Curve so that train access is via the Tyne Valley line and not therefore placing further pressure on the East Coast Main Line itself. The station could be served by extending Northumberland Line trains or the new Newcastle – Berwick local trains (see Section 2.1).

5. Rail Infrastructure Improvements

5.1 Greater Prioritisation for Local Services (Suggested delivery by 2027) *(A Fairer North East, A Connected North East)*

Whilst national, strategic rail routes are important, and some degree of prioritisation for these is perhaps justified, SENRUG believes that Network Rail must be required to invest in infrastructure, particularly on the East Coast Main Line, so that local services, and stops at Northumberland stations on long-distance services are not squeezed out. SENRUG believes legitimate aspirations of local stakeholders have been disregarded for too long and investment has not been made to support these local service requirements. The North East Transport Strategy should strongly oppose under investment in infrastructure for local services.

5.2 East Coast Main Line Power Supply (Suggested delivery by 2027) *(Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure)*

Arising from Section 5.1, Network Rail must be advised to ensure the power supply to the East Coast Main Line between Newcastle and Berwick, and in particular at Marshall Meadows (near to the Scottish border, north of Berwick), is upgraded to support all the passenger train service aspirations listed in Sections 2 and 3.

5.3 Double Tracking of Northumberland Line (Suggested delivery by 2032) *(Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure)*

a) There will be demand for further passenger services and freight on the Northumberland Line and there should be an intervention to deliver this. The remaining single track sections are:

- i. Benton North to West of Northumberland Park station
- ii. Through Northumberland Park station
- iii. East of Northumberland Park station to south of Seghill Loop
- iv. North of Seghill loop to Newsham South junction

b) The most challenging section is likely to be through Northumberland Park station. This can be achieved by utilising land to the south of the present Metro tracks to build a new westbound line towards Benton and an additional Metro platform. The current Metro eastbound line and platform face to the coast then becomes the Network Rail line and platform to Newcastle. On the other side of this island platform, the existing Metro westbound line and platform becomes the eastbound line to the coast.

5.4 Ashington – Butterwell (Suggested business case sign-off by 2032, delivery by 2040) *(Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure)*

The privately operated freight line between Ashington and Butterwell junction should be re-connected to the Northumberland Line at Ashington, and have a north-east junction created Butterwell. This line, which could also be double-tracked, would then create an additional freight

route between Benton Junction and Butterwell Junction avoiding the East Coast Main line, and allow freight traffic from port of Blyth to travel north via Butterwell without reversing at Bedlington, and freeing up capacity on the Northumberland Line between Marchey's House and the Bedlington sidings. The route could also be used for passenger services as described in Section 2.5.

5.5 Benton Junction Capacity Enhancements (Suggested delivery by 2040) *(Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure)*

Benton Junction should be improved to allow Northumberland Line trains to join / leave the East Coast Main Line at higher speeds than the current 20 miles per hour restriction by moving the junction a little further south towards the A191 Whitley Road bridge, so the junction is not at such a sharp angle.

5.6 Creation of New Freight Route (Suggested business case sign-off by 2032, delivery by 2040) *(Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure)*

Proposals at Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 taken together create a 3-track dual signalled / 4-track railway from Benton Junction as far as Butterwell Junction, creating an overflow and diversionary route for freight and passenger trains, and allowing new passenger rail services to be developed.

5.7 Newcastle Station Rail Capacity (Suggested delivery by 2030) *(Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure)*

The re-development of Newcastle station ([Intervention NE06: Delivery Plan page 119](#)) to create pedestrian access from the Stephenson Quarter should include measures to increase train capacity through the station, for instance by joining platform 1 to platform 9 to create an additional through running line. A replacement bay platform capable of taking 4 or 5 coach trains should then be provided by repositioning the current overhead line support masts.

6. Rail – Metro – Bus Integration

6.1 Physical Integration (Rail – Metro)

6.1.1 Manors (Suggested delivery by 2040) *(Connection Between Different Transport Types, Safety of Women & Girls)*

Manors has the potential to be a significant rail – Metro interchange, offering a more direct connection between local rail and the Metro route to the Coast (ie no need to change at Monument). Yet the station is not listed as a Rail – Metro interchange in [Delivery Plan, page 38, Rail Partnerships para 2](#). The station also serves the University of Northumbria campus, and student accommodation, and provides good access to the Newcastle Riverside, Millennium Bridge and the Artists Quarter. The station should be redeveloped with a 2nd (possibly off-set) platform should be built so that trains on any of the 3 running lines can serve the station. Both platforms should have level access to the station entrance, the Metro station below, and the 4th floor of the adjacent multi-storey car park, which gives access to the high level walkways to the city centre ([see also Intervention NE11 – Delivery Plan page 85](#)). An additional access to the station could be created to the south east of the station through the arch underneath the student accommodation to Pandon Bank. Manors would then become a truly integrated Metro / local rail interchange station, taking

pressure off the Metro stations at central and Monument, as well as saving journey times, creating public transport better access for students, and assisting with the rejuvenation of the area.

6.1.2 Benton East (Suggested delivery by 2040)

(Connection Between Different Transport Types, A Connected North East, An International North East)

A further heavy rail / Metro interchange station should be built at Benton East as described in [Section 4.4](#), to facilitate access from North Northumberland to the Airport, Gosforth, Northumberland Park and The Coast, without passengers needing to go in to Newcastle and then back out again.

6.2 Physical Interconnection (Rail – Bus)

6.2.1 Buses to Station Turning Circles (Suggested delivery by 2027)

(Connection Between Different Transport Types, Safety of Women & Girls)

The Combined Authority should use its powers to direct local buses to serve station turning circles at Morpeth, Cramlington and Seaton Delaval stations, as well as any others where the walking distance from the station to the nearest bus stop is more than 50 meters.

6.2.2 Morpeth – Newcastle Airport Bus (Suggested delivery by 2027)

(Connection Between Different Transport Types, An International North East)

The new hourly bus service 777 between Morpeth bus station and the Airport should additionally run to and from Morpeth train station, and form part of a rail – air link with through tickets. This would considerably shorten journey times to the Airport from north Northumberland and the Scottish Borders.

6.2.3 Cramlington Station Road Infrastructure (Suggested delivery by 2027)

(Connection Between Different Transport Types)

A bus only access road from the A1171 / A1172 roundabout into Crow Hall Lane and the station turning circle should be created, making it easy for bus services travelling along the A1171 between this roundabout and the A1171 / Northumbrian Road roundabout to serve the station turning circle. Buses would rejoin the A1171 at the new roundabout at the entrance to Nelson Village.

6.2.4 Rail – Bus Connection to Cramlington Emergency Hospital (Suggested delivery by 2027)

(Connection Between Different Transport Types, Safety of Women & Girls, A Fairer North East)

A new bus service should connect both Cramlington and Seaton Delaval station turning circles to Cramlington Town Centre and the hospital main entrance. The same bus should also serve Seaton Delaval Hall. It should run at least hourly (connecting with train times at Cramlington) every day. A suggested route is: East Hartford – Nelson Village – Cramlington Station Turning Circle – Cramlington Dudley Lane shops – Cramlington A&E Hospital Main Entrance – Seaton Delaval Station Turning Circle – Seaton Delaval Village – Seaton Delaval Hall – Seaton Sluice Village then either north to South Beach and Blyth or south to Hartley Square and Whitley Bay.

6.3 Fares & Ticketing Integration (Suggested delivery by 2032) *(Ticketing & Fares)*

a) The current Nexus POP Card should be extended to include all buses and all local trains in the Mayoral region. “Local” trains should include those run by Northern and TransPennine Express – both DfT owned companies - and the new Newcastle – Berwick local service proposed at Section 2.1.

b) The POP Card already includes Newcastle – Ashington services (the Northumberland Line) and this is most welcome, but it creates a significant fares disparity for journeys to Newcastle between Ashington and Morpeth and between Seaton Delaval and Cramlington, with fares from Ashington and Seaton Delaval being much cheaper, and the service being twice as frequent. This disparity needs to be removed urgently. Therefore, a first and immediate phase of the initiative should be to bring tickets on local trains between Morpeth and Newcastle into the POP system.

6.4 Timetable Integration (Suggested delivery by 2032) *(Connection Between Different Transport Types, Safety of Women & Girls)*

For stations where the train services are only hourly, it is imperative that buses be timed to arrive just before the train, and to depart just after it. A bus to a train station that would then be followed by a 50-minute wait for a train is no interconnection at all.

7. Station Facilities

7.1 Station Management and Station Facilities (Suggested delivery by 2032) *(A Fairer North East)*

SENUG has no view as to which organisation should operate stations. All stations in the region are in fact already managed by publicly-owned bodies. However, a minimum set of criteria for each class of station (regardless of whether it is heavy rail or Metro) should be established, which all station operators should be mandated to achieve. SENUG’s proposals for minimum station facilities is as follows:

7.2 All Stations: (Suggested delivery by 2032) *(A Fairer North East)*

- Step free access to all platforms
- Signage showing which platforms are for which destinations
- Customer Information Screens
- Tannoy Announcements
- Ticket purchasing facilities
- Visual display of timetables and routes (ie Timetable Posters or for Metro service frequency posters)
- Help Point
- Waiting shelters on all platforms (unless underground)
- Seating on all platforms

7.3 Interchange & Town Centre Stations: (Suggested delivery by 2032)
(Eg Ashington, Newsham, Northumberland Park, Cramlington, Manors)
(A Fairer North East)

All of the above, and

- National Rail stations should also have a pre-paid ticket collection facility
- ATM
- Kiosk or coffee cart

7.4 Stations Also Serving Long Distance Trains: (Suggested delivery by 2032)
(Eg Berwick, Alnmouth, Morpeth)
(A Fairer North East, Safety of Women & Girls)

All of the above, and

- Ticket Office staffed 07:00 to 18:00 daily as a minimum
- Toilet, disabled toilet and babychange facility open to passengers 07:00 to 18:00 daily as a minimum
- Internal Waiting Room available to passengers 07:00 to 18:00 daily as a minimum
- Disabled assistance to board / alight trains 07:00 to 18:00 daily as a minimum
- Buffet or café facility

7.5 Technology (Suggested delivery by 2032)
(A Fairer North East)

a) It should not be necessary to require a passenger to use his or her mobile phone to obtain train running information, at any station.

b) A method of purchasing tickets using cash should be retained at all stations. This might be by obtaining a “Promise to Pay” voucher and paying on-board train staff. This is to facilitate travel for disabled and vulnerable passengers and teenagers who may not have a bank card or a payment app on their phone.

c) Stations with chargeable car parks should also retain a facility to pay by card and it should not be necessary to download an app to buy a parking ticket.

8. River Crossings (Metro)

8.1 River Crossings for Public Transport (Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure, A Connected North East)

The Combined Authority’s desire to create new river crossings is noted, and SENRUG believes rail or multi-purpose crossings should be created, as follows:

8.2 Percy Main to Metro South Shields Branch (River Tyne) (Suggested delivery by 2040) (Reach & Resilience of Infrastructure, A Connected North East)

The new Metro route proposed from Northumberland Park via Cobalt, Silverlink to Percy Main (see Section 2.6) could be extended to the international ferry terminal and then under the River Tyne to

join with the South Shields branch of the Metro. This route would then give the Metro a second Tyne crossing and prove invaluable when the current Metro bridge between Newcastle and Gateshead is closed for engineering work. It would potentially allow the Shields Ferry to be withdrawn. It should therefore be evaluated against the £14.5m to re-locate Shields ferry North Landing to Fish Quay – [Delivery Plan page 71](#).

8.3 Blyth Town Centre to North Blyth (River Blyth) (Suggested delivery by 2040) *(A Fairer North East)*

The new Metro route proposed from the Airport to Blyth Town Centre (see Section 2.4) could be extended under the River Blyth, to join the proposed route from North Blyth via Cambios to Ashington route (see Section 2.8), assisting with the reinvigoration of Cambois and North Blyth, and creating a direct link from Ashington to Blyth (and the airport, though for the Airport a faster journey might be achieved by taking a direct train to Northumberland Park and changing).

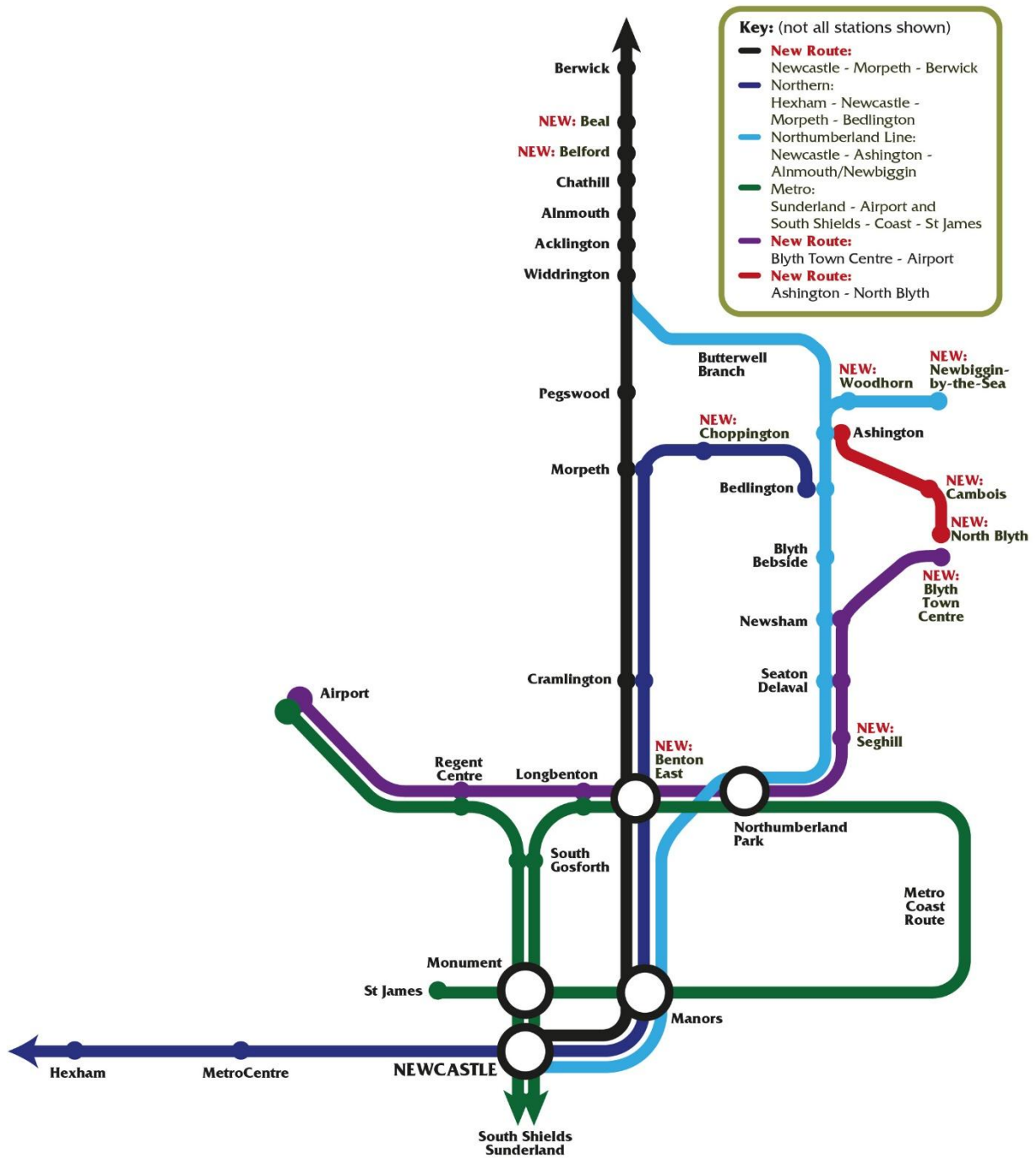
9. Summary

Annex 1 shows a diagrammatic map of the rail network SENRUG envisages for South East and East Northumberland plus north of Tyne Metro services, with the interventions listed in Sections 2.1 to 2.5 and 2.8 of this response fully in place. Additionally, a link to a pdf of SENRUG's full campaign leaflet (Proposals for New Rail Services in South East and East Northumberland) presented in read order is [here](#).

(map on next page)

End – Annex 1 follows

Annex 1: SENRUG's Rail Vision for Northumberland



End of Annex 1