

Consultation by the Manchester Recovery Task Force

Response from Friends of Davenport Station

Introduction.

It is clear - and was clear to many observers before it was introduced - that the Manchester area rail timetable changes in 2018 led to severe congestion resulting from increasing the number of trains passing through Piccadilly (platform 13 and 14) and Oxford Road stations from 12 per hour off-peak to 15 per hour, partly to accommodate trains from the Manchester Victoria area via the new 'Ordsall Chord'. In addition, our line gained an extra train on most weekday hours, as pressure from Derbyshire County Council resulted in a half-hourly service between Piccadilly and Buxton, which did not fit neatly into the half-hourly pattern of services between Hazel Grove and Manchester.

This extra service was withdrawn on the onset of the Covid crisis, and we have reverted to two trains per hour, one between Buxton and Manchester and one - now operated by brand-new electric trains - between Hazel Grove and Blackpool. Extra services at peak times have been rare, especially since it is found necessary for some of them to omit calls at Davenport and Woodsmoor, despite many protests from user groups and even the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

Solutions

Eventually, Network Rail admitted that the 2018 service was not tenable without additional infrastructure, and a 'Recovery Task Force' was formed to suggest solutions to the problem. This has now reported and user groups are invited to comment. The general plan seems to be to reduce the number of trains using the Ordsall Chord, and also avoid congestion in the Piccadilly area by removing conflicting moves. This at the expense of long-standing through services, notably the trains from the Sheffield line to Manchester Airport which have to reverse in Piccadilly's terminal platforms. The idea of through long-distance trains from many parts of the North to the Airport seems to be out of favour.

The authors of the consultation document offer for discussion three possible scenarios (imaginatively named A, B and C) for implementation in 2022 on the basis that there is no short-term prospect of extra tracks or platforms. We'll look at these from the point of view of Davenport and Woodsmoor passengers in particular: the full document is available on line for those interested: tinyurl.com/idw61ykt

Option A

This is basically the timetable we had before 2019, except that we (assuming no 'skip-stopping at Davenport and Woodsmoor') will see two Blackpool electric trains per hour, and one from Buxton, with peak-time Buxton extras from Buxton. However, it is unlikely to please Derbyshire County Council who fought for extra Buxton trains.

At present, Blackpool trains alternate between Hazel Grove and the Airport; under this scheme, the airport one would run to Hazel Grove instead, where trains can be held in the sidings there during 'layovers'. It also makes good use of the overhead electric supply.

The Alderley Edge -Southport service, introduced in 2018, which is the most vulnerable to congestion due to many junctions, is divided, one Piccadilly – Alderley Edge and one Victoria – Southport, which is sure to upset Southport line passengers.

Option B

Option B is more drastic. There would be two trains per hour from Buxton to Piccadilly, at 30-minute intervals, plus peak-time-only workings between Hazel Grove and Wigan North Western serving the Oxford Road line.

In addition, it is proposed to move the Manchester – Crewe local service to the Styal route, by-passing Stockport. There would be two trains per hour from Blackpool to Alderley Edge via Stockport, but anyone from our line (and others) wishing to travel to local stations beyond Alderley Edge would have to additionally change trains there.

The existing North Wales – Airport service run by Transport for Wales would be diverted to run via Manchester Victoria to Stalybridge.

Option C

Option C is similar to Option B except that the North Wales service would run from Piccadilly via Stockport and the mid-Cheshire line where it will call only at Altrincham, Knutsford and Northwich which will thus gain a half-hourly service. This would benefit our users wishing to travel to stations on that route, especially North Wales which currently requires travelling to Piccadilly or using the slow train to Chester and changing there.

The earlier promise to provide a faster journey for Buxton passengers appears to have been forgotten. In the suggestion we have been given, Buxton trains call at every station including Middlewood, Heaton Chapel and Levenshulme, taking 68 minutes each way.

Our Suggested Comments

We agree entirely that the timetable needs revision, and that the previous concentration on the Airport was not in the interests of day-to-day travellers.

Option A appears quite attractive from our viewpoint, especially as the majority of journeys would be in the new and comfortable electric trains. But the railway companies have consistently failed in recent years to accept that Davenport and Woodsmoor are important destination stations for High Peak and Disley residents as well as the Manchester commuting trade (which seems likely to decrease post-Covid). We need an extra peak train to/from Buxton calling at our stations.

Options B and C are likely to offer us only slow travel in two 30-year-old diesel trains per hour with awful '3 and 2' seating, travel to Piccadilly only except at peak times, and inability to find a seat at periods such as Christmas and Football Saturdays, a situation much improved when the train starts from Hazel Grove.

Perhaps we are wrong, and new diesels or the re-purposed 4-coach 'bi-mode' trains originally intended for Southport – Alderley Edge will be provided. At present we can only hope; train comfort will be a vital selling point in future.

The proposed omission of Woodsmoor calls by peak-time trains is obviously unacceptable.

We have been shown this suggested weekday 'Standard Hour' timetable for option C.

Trains will also run in the early and late periods, but we have no information. Mid-Cheshire line trains and non-Northern trains are not included.

	A	B		C	D		E			
Buxton	-	-	-	0719	-	-	-	-	0749	-
Dove Holes	-	-	-	0726	-	-	-	-	0756	-
Chapel-en-le-Frith	-	-	-	0731	-	-	-	-	0801	-
Whaley Bridge	-	-	-	0738	-	-	-	-	0808	-
Furness Vale	-	-	-	0742	-	-	-	-	0812	-
New Mills Newtown	-	-	-	0745	-	-	-	-	0815	-
Disley	-	-	-	0749	-	-	-	-	0819	-
Middlewood	-	-	-	0753	-	-	-	-	0823	-
Hazel Grove	-	-	-	0759	-	-	0820	-	0829	-
Woodsmoor	-	-	-	0802	-	-	-	-	0832	-
Davenport	-	-	-	0804	-	-	0823	-	0834	-
Stockport	-	0757	0807	0812	-	0825	0830	-	0840	0843
Heaton Chapel	-	0800	-	0815	-	0828	-	-	0845	-
Levenshulme	-	0803	-	0818	-	0831	-	-	0848	-
Manchester Piccadilly		0813	0817	0828	-	0838	0841		0850	0856

A: From Alderley Edge. B: peak-time only from Stoke. C: from Alderley Edge D: peak-time to Wigan North Western. E: from Stoke.

		B		C	D		E		G		
Manchester Piccadilly	1651		1706	-	1709	1718*	1721	1737		1745	1751
Levenshulme	1658	-	1713	-	-	-	1728	1743	-	-	1758
Heaton Chapel	1701	-	1716	-	-	-	1731	1746	-	-	1801
Stockport	1706	-	1720	-	1718	1730	1736	1751	-	1756	1806
Davenport	1710	-	-	-	1722	-	1740	-	-	-	1810
Woodsmoor	1713	-	-	-	-	-	1743	-	-	-	1813
Hazel Grove	1717	-	-	-	1725	-	1747	-	-	-	1817
Middlewood	1722	-	-	-	-	-	1752	-	-	-	1822
Disley	1726	-	-	-	-	-	1756	-	-	-	1826
New Mills Newtown	1730	-	-	-	-	-	1800	-	-	-	1830
Furness Vale	1734	-	-	-	-	-	1804	-	-	-	1834
Whaley Bridge	1737	-	-	-	-	-	1807	-	-	-	1837
Chapel-en-le-Frith	1745	-	-	-	-	-	1814	-	-	-	1845
Dove Holes	1750	-	-	-	-	-	1820	-	-	-	1850
Buxton	1758	-	-	-	-	-	1828	-	-	-	1858

B: To Alderley Edge. C: Peak time only from Wigan. D: Peak time only to Stoke. E: To Alderley Edge. G: to Stoke.

