

STOURBRIDGE LINE USER GROUP

Response to the Consultation on the Draft 2026 Delivery Plan for Transport

Introduction

This document is the Stourbridge Line User Group's response to the public consultation on the Draft 2026 Delivery Plan for Transport.

This consultation response is unashamedly, and obviously, centred on enhancing the travel experience and opportunities for users of this line, including potential new users who can be attracted to the railway by improving its offering. Since rail users do not restrict themselves to single routes, our interest and comments naturally extend to the convenience of using connecting routes and rail links to significant destinations elsewhere.

The role of the Stourbridge Line User Group is to promote the interests of users of a particular stretch of line while taking consideration of the benefits of this railway to the economic well-being of the areas it serves. Our proposals and ideas represent our vision of how the Stourbridge line can achieve its full potential to support convenient, high quality passenger transport and economic development of the area served by this railway.

The Stourbridge Line User Group is generally supportive of service improvements and infrastructure enhancements that serve these aims: examples in the 2026 Plan include the development of connections at Birmingham Moor Street to both north and south via the Bordesley curves, and Midland Metro network extensions which also have direct connections to the Stourbridge line. We naturally support schemes to reduce overcrowding and positive ticketing developments including smart ticketing.

Conversely, the Group will be critical of missed opportunities, poor decision-making and lack of detail. For example, it is clear that reinstating Birmingham Snow Hill Platform 4 and the Rowley Regis turnback will enable changes to passenger services, but the precise changes are still not known despite repeated requests for this information. Such an information vacuum results in concern that the lack of detail is hiding a planned worsening of service for some users.

GEOGRAPHICAL INTEREST

The Stourbridge Line User Group's principal interest is of course Corridor G, along which the Stourbridge line itself runs.

In addition, over many years the Group has campaigned for the revival of passenger rail services along the Stourbridge Junction-Brierley Hill-Dudley-Walsall railway line, currently used in part for freight services only, and therefore Corridor E is equally relevant to the Group's aspirations.

Potential connections in the longer term also give rise to a comment in relation to Corridor F.

CORRIDOR G

Rowley Regis Turnback & Birmingham Snow Hill Platform 4 Reinstatement

In principle, we welcome this investment during the period 2016-2021, which should provide additional capacity on the Stourbridge line. It is abundantly clear to peak time users that extra capacity is needed between Rowley Regis and Birmingham, and if the investment enabled additional trains starting from Rowley Regis to complement the existing capacity from further out then the situation would be much improved.

However, we would not welcome any worsening of passenger services arising from changes made after the reinstatements. We are not as yet aware of the planned service following this investment, but at one time it was suggested that a new timetable might include the following features:

- Reduced off-peak frequency service at Cradley Heath and Stourbridge Junction (both of which are major transport interchanges)
- Cessation of direct services from west of Rowley Regis to the inner stations of Smethwick Galton Bridge, The Hawthorns and Jewellery Quarter (which between them provide access to national rail and Midland Metro connections, West Bromwich Albion football club and part of central Birmingham)
- Significant reduction in the quantity of station-pairs served by direct trains on the Snow Hill lines

We do not know whether this is still the intention, but the disadvantages are obvious – and it would be simply perverse, for example, to make significant investment in the Midland Metro network and then reduce access to it, or to hamper the economic development of part of inner Birmingham, by deliberately reducing the usefulness of the transport links serving them.

Snow Hill Station Redevelopment

The Stourbridge Line User Group considers that Birmingham Snow Hill station is currently not fit for purpose, and supports the redevelopment of Birmingham Snow Hill in order to improve the experience of rail users at this important station.

The existing Snow Hill station suffers from a number of shortcomings, including:

- A poor environment for passengers entering the station by its main entrance on Colmore Row
- Poor access to the station from Livery Street
- Inadequate concourse area and facilities
- Inadequate stair/escalator/lift provision between the principal concourse area and the platforms for the numbers using the station at peak times
- Very poor platform level environment for passengers with little natural light and unattractive architecture, made significantly worse by the fact that the buildings on the platforms combined with the pillars for the multi-storey car park leave very little space for movement along the platforms and therefore hinder access to and from trains
- Overcrowding at the ticket gate line when two trains arrive simultaneously during the morning peak
- Unnecessarily limited flexibility by the continued closure of Platform 4 (despite the Midland Metro having been diverted away from it)

The exterior of the station needs to be far more prominent near all entrances, and street signage needs to be improved to give an indication of the station location.

Suitable emphasis should be given to the prime function of the station as a transport hub offering convenient access to and from the surrounding areas and other transport links; the office development should not negatively impact the experience of rail passengers either visually or as a physical obstruction.

CORRIDOR E

Metro Extension – Wednesbury to Brierley Hill

Brierley Hill to Stourbridge

The Stourbridge Line User Group supports the Midland Metro Brierley Hill extension in principle, since it aligns with the Group's belief that the revival of rail passenger services along the Stourbridge-Dudley-Walsall route will generate benefits to the local area and its population. The Group also supports the proposed extension of the line from Wednesbury to Walsall by 2030.

However, the scheme does not provide a connection with the Stourbridge line itself, which leaves a missing link between Brierley Hill and Stourbridge.

This missing link should be filled as soon as possible by a rail-based line, particularly because development plans exist for the Brierley Hill and Dudley areas which should be easily accessible from the areas of Worcestershire, the Black Country and elsewhere serviced by the Stourbridge line.

While we are encouraged by the inclusion of this missing link as a scheme for further investigation, we believe that delay will be damaging to the local economy for want of a short section of rail infrastructure once the Metro Brierley Hill extension is complete.

The Stourbridge Line User Group calls for the rail network to be enhanced at the earliest opportunity to allow passenger rail connections from Stourbridge Junction to Brierley Hill, Dudley and beyond, in particular to connect with the Midland Metro extension to Brierley Hill. Ideally, the Brierley Hill-Stourbridge section would be operated as a continuation of services from Walsall, Birmingham and/or Wolverhampton rather than as a short shuttle imposing extra changes (and thus a disincentive to use the service) on passengers.

We also trust that intermediate stations between Stourbridge Junction and Canal Street to maximise the utility of the service to the local population.

CORRIDOR F

Dudley-Russells Hall Hospital-Brierley Hill

No date has been specified for this aspiration, although it is shown as a tram-train line on page 28 of Annex 2 (2030 Transport Network). There are no details of route but, if the Stourbridge to Dudley rail corridor was used, a branch from the Metro line either close to Pedmore Road or at the King Street/Flood Street junction would seem most likely to access the hospital from the east. The Stourbridge Line User Group believes that there is another long term possibility to get to Russells Hall and that is via the Pensnett branch and A4101 to approach the hospital from the west, and open

up a circular route (Stourbridge-Moor Street-Pensnett Trading Estate-Pensnett-Russells Hall Hospital-Dudley-Brierley Hill-Stourbridge).

Strategic Park and Ride sites

Page 10 of the 2026 Plan document (Table 2) shows Broad Locations for Strategic Park and Ride. The map on page 7 shows Fernhill Heath as a possible new station by 2026, and this is an aspiration of Worcestershire County Council. The Stourbridge Line User Group believes that this station site should be included in Table 2 as another location that could be considered.

In addition, Kidderminster has been identified in existing strategies as a new Park and Ride site. The Stourbridge Line User Group believes that Stourport-upon-Severn, with a population of over 20,000, would be better served by a Park and Ride site at Hartlebury station.

Other Observations

While the corridors to the east of Stourbridge (corridor G) and to the north-east of Stourbridge (corridor E) are included in the draft 2026 Plan, there are no proposals for the corridor north of Stourbridge via the A491 and A449 to Wolverhampton. Although this corridor is in South Staffordshire from Lloyds Hill to Holbeache, it serves large residential communities at Wordsley, Kingswinford, Wall Heath, Wombourne and Penn. Both of these roads suffer from congestion and traffic can be nose to tail from Wall Heath to Stourbridge, as well as between Kingswinford and Brierley Hill. Under the original HS2 Connectivity Package, the northern end of the route from i54 to Penn would have been served by a Sprint route, but this has been relegated to a reserve scheme. The corridor is served by National Express bus routes 255 (Wolverhampton to Merry Hill) and 256 (Wolverhampton to Stourbridge) and these routes were designated as core bus routes in the original Movement for Growth consultation document. These routes are important as part of HS2 connectivity from the residential areas along the route as they will connect with heavy rail at Wolverhampton and Stourbridge, with Metro at Wolverhampton, Brierley Hill and Merry Hill and with tram-train at Pensnett Road. Any possible long term use of the Pensnett branch for rail based services could also create a connection point at Bromley.

Conclusion

The Stourbridge Line User Group welcomes the publication of the 2026 Draft Delivery Plan for Transport. If the projects detailed in the document are brought to fruition in the timescales specified, we are looking at significant improvement to the West Midlands' transport network and resulting benefits to the local economy.