

## Journey times between provincial cities will be slashed by high speed rail

Journey times between major provincial cities will be slashed, in many cases by more than half, by high speed rail.



'The HS2 second phase announcement is a watershed moment for Britain,' according to Graham Stringer

By David Millward, Transport Editor

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The impact of the network will be unveiled by the Department for Transport within weeks when it confirms the route for the second stage of the project taking the line north of Birmingham to Leeds and Manchester.

While much has been made of how the £33 billion project will dramatically cut the journey time between London and the north, this will be the first time the DfT has calculated its impact on provincial Britain.

Its findings will be contained in a Command paper setting out phase two of the scheme in detail.

The introduction of 225mph trains will mean a trip from Leeds to Sheffield falling from 41 minutes to 17, while a journey to Nottingham will take only 29 minutes compared with the current 115.

A trip from Birmingham to Manchester will take 49 minutes, rather than the 88, while passengers will spend only 127 minutes getting to Newcastle – compared with the current 194, although the journey north of Leeds will be on conventional rather than high speed track.

Even though some of the stations will be outside the city centre – such as at Nottingham and Sheffield, passengers will still benefit from considerable time savings.

DfT planners believe the scheme will transform the economy in the north, bringing cities closer together and attracting jobs to the region by rebalancing the British economy as a whole.

Critics, however, believe the trains could prove too expensive for many passengers if a premium is charged for using the high speed service.

In the Commons, while southern and midlands MPs on both sides have been vociferous in opposing the scheme which they argue will cause huge environmental damage, their counterparts further north have been enthusiastic supporters.

“The HS2 second phase announcement is a watershed moment for Britain,” said Graham Stringer, Labour MP for Blackley & Broughton.

“What HS2 will do is bring the North and the Midlands closer together, creating a new economic hub that, for the first time in our history, will provide some proper competition to London.

“That can only be good news – not just for the cities themselves but for the country as a whole”.

His enthusiasm is shared by Stuart Andrew, Tory MP for Pudsey. “HS2 will create opportunities for people in my own constituency and all along the route which cannot be overlooked by those opposing the project.

“I want my constituents to be able to access jobs in other parts of the country if they want to without worrying about the stress of moving house as they will just be able to hop on a train instead.

“Once people start to realise how it will transform their lives, I hope they will see the scale of the opportunity we have on our hands.”

The first stage of HS2 from Euston to Birmingham is due to open in 2026, with the second stage – the Y route to Birmingham expected to be completed in another six years with the line to Manchester likely to cut through part of George Osborne’s Tatton constituency in Cheshire.

The plans are understood to include a new station at Toton sidings, currently a goods yard, which

will serve both Nottingham and Derby.

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