

Response from FRECCLES to the proposed MRTF December 2022 timetable

These are the views of The Friends of Eccles Station (FRECCLES) on the December 2022 timetable proposals by the Manchester Recovery Task Force, as far as they affect Eccles. We are only commenting on the Monday to Saturday services and have no objection to the proposed Sunday service serving Eccles.

We welcome the fact that the Liverpool - Manchester Airport stopping service will run every hour throughout the day including peak.

We are very disappointed that the proposed timetables do not maintain the current 2 tph for Eccles in the peak periods (7 to 10 a.m. and 4 to 7 p.m.). They do not even meet the Northern franchise specifications for December 2017. Three trains to Leeds have been removed in the evening peak to Victoria, replaced by only one train to Victoria. Three trains to Chester have been removed in the morning peak with no replacement. The replacement of some calls at Eccles by Leeds – Chester trains by calls by Wigan – Manchester Victoria trains is partial and does not provide a coherent service. There was no mention of this service reduction in the summary of Option B+ in the MRTF Consultation Response Document.

We believe it is essential that Eccles continues to have at least a 2 tph service in the peak periods. The proposed timetables constitute a severely reduced service compared to the present. In particular we do not understand why the 'counter peak' service has been reduced from 6 trains to 4 trains in the evening peak towards Manchester and from 6 trains to 3 trains in the morning peak away from Manchester. The latest (2017) passenger survey data from TfGM show that in the morning peak 31% of all boarders and alighters at Eccles were 'counter peak', i.e. were travelling away from Manchester.

FRECCLES would like to see the Chester - Leeds services call at Eccles in the peak periods, as we largely have at present. This would mean 3 calls in each direction between 7 and 10 a.m., and 3 calls in each direction between 4 and 7 p.m. These trains provide useful connections to Chester, N.Wales and Leeds, and further connectivity to Liverpool at Newton-le-Willows, and have the advantage of running on Saturdays as well as Monday to Friday.

We would also like **all** the Manchester Victoria - Wigan North Western services to call at Eccles - peak and counter-peak. This would mean 3 calls in each direction between 7 and 10 a.m., and 3 calls in each direction between 4 and 7 p.m.

In addition **all** the peak Liverpool - Manchester Victoria trains (08.32 and 17.29 from MCV, 07.30 and 16.30 from LIV) should call at Eccles. There seems to be no good reason why not. We are disappointed that this service, described in the MRTF documents for Options B and B+ as '1tph (peak only)', is in fact only 1 train each way in the whole morning peak and 1 train each way in the whole evening peak.

We are sure that any obstacles to these additional peak-hour trains calling at Eccles can be overcome, especially as none of them will use the Castlefield corridor. Eccles offers a significant interchange to the west of the city region with established connections with Metrolink and the bus network. It needs good rail links in all directions. We need more trains, not fewer.

09/12/2021