

Central and West Lancashire Rail Options



August 2020



INTRODUCTION

Central and west Lancashire is an area with considerable potential for growth, with sites potentially to be allocated in Local Plans for residential and employment developments. At the moment some parts of the area are poorly served by public transport, which leads to residents, workers and visitors making many journeys by car. Rail services in the area are poor – infrequent, at times unreliable, and slow.

Chorley, South Ribble, and West Lancashire Councils have all declared climate emergencies, and all aim to achieve net carbon zero by 2030. With transport as the largest contributor of carbon emissions across the country, action to reduce carbon emissions from all modes of transport is imperative.

When petrol and diesel car trips are replaced with journeys by train, carbon emissions are reduced – especially when trains are electric or powered by other zero-carbon sources.

When new developments are brought forward, easy access to sustainable transport is vital in preventing the creation of new car trips. High-quality fixed track (rail) services, in particular, can help unlock new sites by providing attractive and fast connections.

The Covid-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed travel behaviours during the time we were working on this report, and we cannot yet know when public transport use will return to previous levels. This report is looking ahead - and assumes that the fundamentals of why people travel, and where, are likely to return to previous patterns in the medium term.

It's time to take a renewed look at public transport opportunities in the area – particularly around the under-utilised rail corridors. This report, commissioned by Chorley, South Ribble, and West Lancashire Councils, sets out ambitious options for a step change in rail services in the area – to transform connectivity and help decarbonise central and west Lancashire.



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LOCATION AND ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

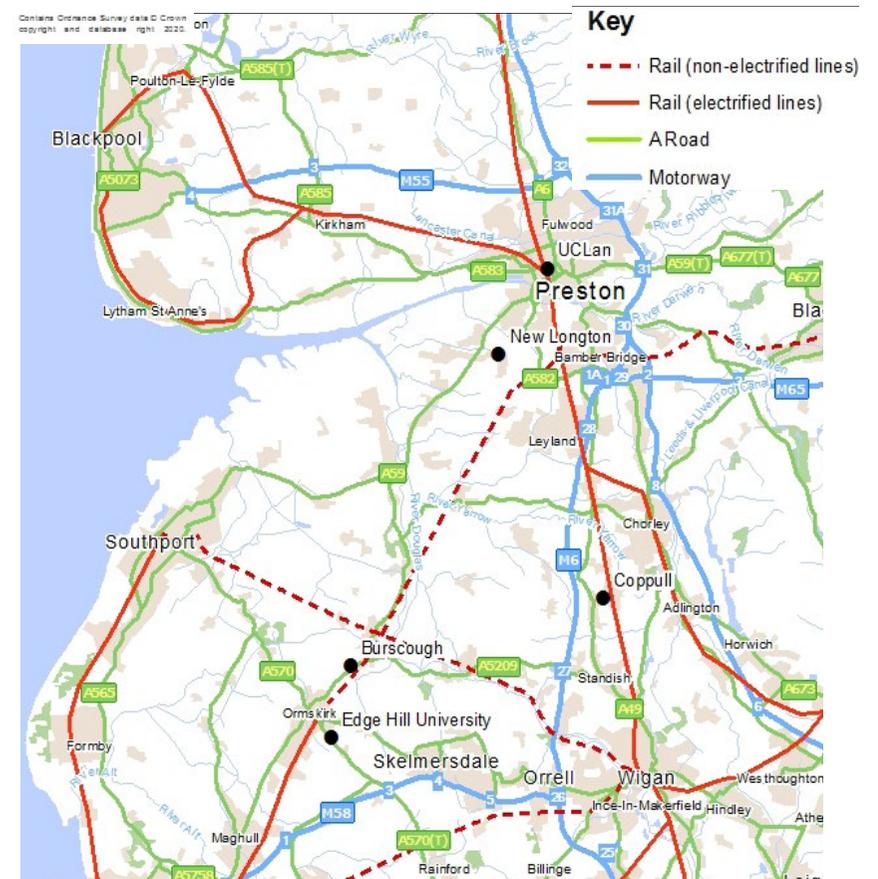
Central and west Lancashire – the area covered by Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire Councils – combines urban and rural areas between the North West cities and is characterised by smaller market towns and villages. Many residents travel out of the area for work and leisure, to Preston, Liverpool and Manchester, and also to neighbouring towns including Southport and Wigan.

The area is served by the West Coast Main Line between Preston and Wigan and the Leyland-Bolton branch towards Manchester. Two unelectrified lines cross the western section of the area: the Ormskirk-Preston line and the Southport-Wigan line. These cross in the small town of Burscough – but serve two separate stations with no convenient interchange between them.

The M6, M58, M61 and M65 motorways carry national, regional and local traffic. The A59 and A565 – dual carriageway in places – are key regional connections between Southport, Ormskirk and Preston.

Place	Population
Preston	122,719
Penwortham	23,047
Southport	90,381
Ormskirk	24,196
Skelmersdale	38,813
Burscough	9,182
Wigan	103,608
Leyland	35,600
Chorley	34,667

Towns within the area shown in red
Source: 2011 Census





CLIMATE EMERGENCY

South Ribble Borough Council proclaimed a Climate Emergency in July 2019 and is aiming to achieve zero net carbon by 2030.

West Lancashire Council also aspires to carbon neutrality by 2030 and has pledged, amongst other things, to work to explore the expansion of community energy, work with partners in West Lancashire to deliver carbon reductions and grow the local economy, and require new-build homes to be carbon zero and new commercial properties to meet carbon reduction design codes.

Chorley Council is taking steps including installing electric vehicle charging points in the town centre, providing electric vehicles to its neighbourhood officers and investing in home energy efficiency service – sharing the same target of net zero carbon by 2030.



“The economic system is enriching a minority while leading humanity towards climate catastrophe. ... We can achieve more for our environment by working cooperatively than we do alone.” – West Lancashire Council motion declaring climate emergency

Full council believes that [...] local governments recognise this cannot, and should not, wait for their national government to act; it is important for the residents of Chorley that its Council commits to reducing CO2eq emissions and work towards carbon neutrality as quickly as possible; bold climate change can deliver economic benefits by way of new jobs, economic savings, market opportunities and improved well-being.” – Chorley Council motion declaring climate emergency, 2020

“This is a global issue and on a local scale South Ribble sees daily the negative effects of poor air quality and increased carbon emissions. The Council are driving this forward but we can’t do this alone. We need to work together to take action and make a difference. I can’t wait to see how we progress.” – Cllr Paul Foster, Leader, South Ribble Borough Council

“It’s vital that we as a council do what we can to tackle the dangerous levels of pollution in our borough. We have set a goal to be carbon neutral by 2030 and we can’t do this alone.” – Cllr Susan Jones, Cabinet Member for Environment, South Ribble Borough Council

“All relevant outside organisation member representatives, Cabinet Members and senior officers [must] work with partners, including individuals and community action groups across the borough to identify ways to make Chorley carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions.” – Chorley Council motion declaring climate emergency, 2020

“We now have to do everything in our power to make [the necessary changes] happen.” – Cllr Steve Holgate, Chorley Council

“The economic system is enriching a minority while leading humanity towards climate catastrophe. ... We can achieve more for our environment by working cooperatively than we do alone.” – West Lancashire Council motion declaring climate emergency

CARBON EMISSIONS

“Unless we set ourselves a tough challenge, we aren’t going to make the effort. There is nobody in the whole world who is [solely] responsible for climate change – everybody is responsible.” – Cllr Laura Lennox, Chorley Council

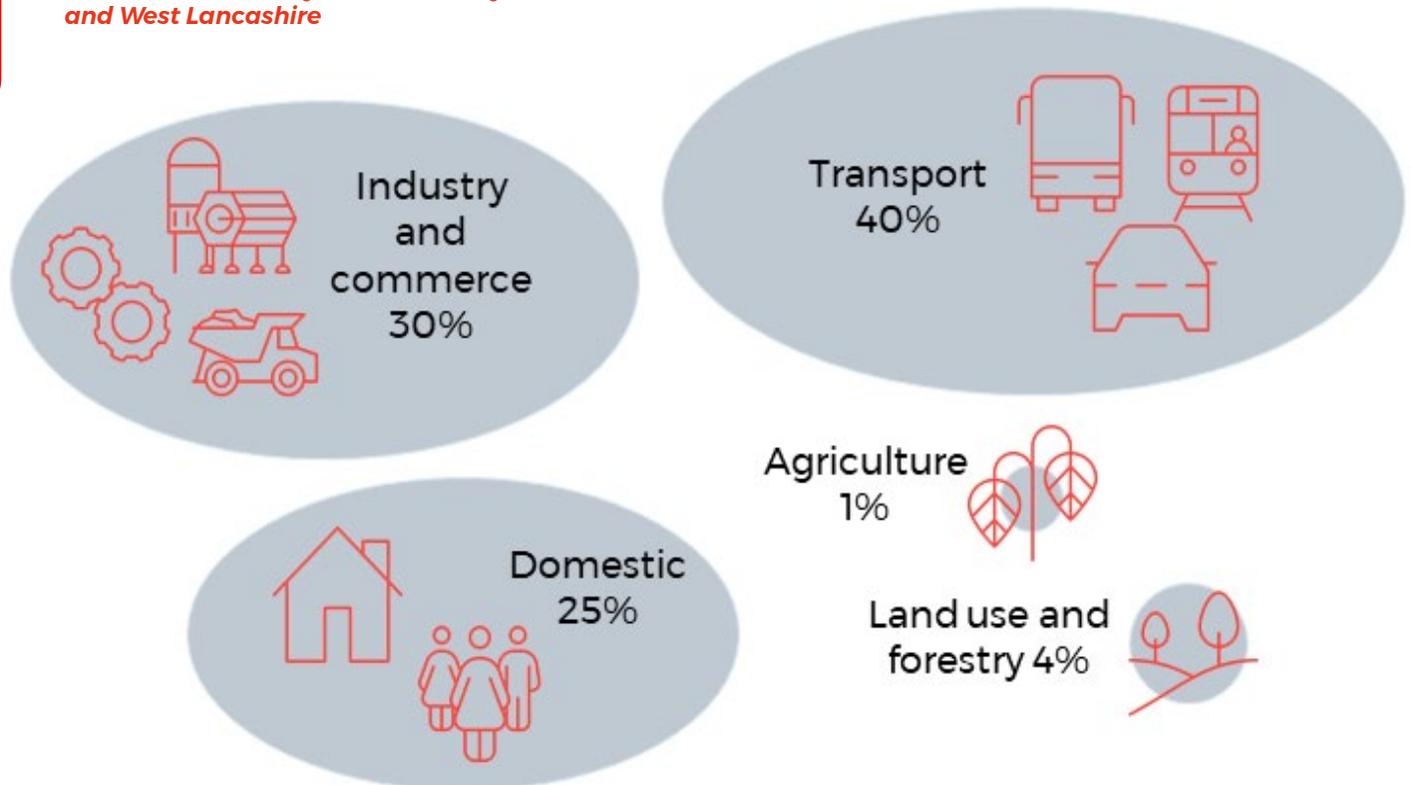
Transport is the largest contributor of carbon emissions in the three districts with 40% of the total, ahead of industry and commerce (30%), domestic (25%), land use and forestry (4%) and agriculture (1%). The split within the transport sector shows that railways are a small contributor. There is an opportunity to eliminate those carbon emissions – but also to reduce the road transport emissions by encouraging motorists to switch some of their trips to more attractive rail services operated by zero-carbon trains.

CO2 emissions by transport sub-sector (kT, 2017), Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire

Sub-sector	kT	%
Road Transport (A roads)	211	24%
Road Transport (Motorways)	442	51%
Road Transport (Minor roads)	200	23%
Transport Other	12	1%
Diesel Railways	8	1%
TOTAL	873	100%

Source: Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

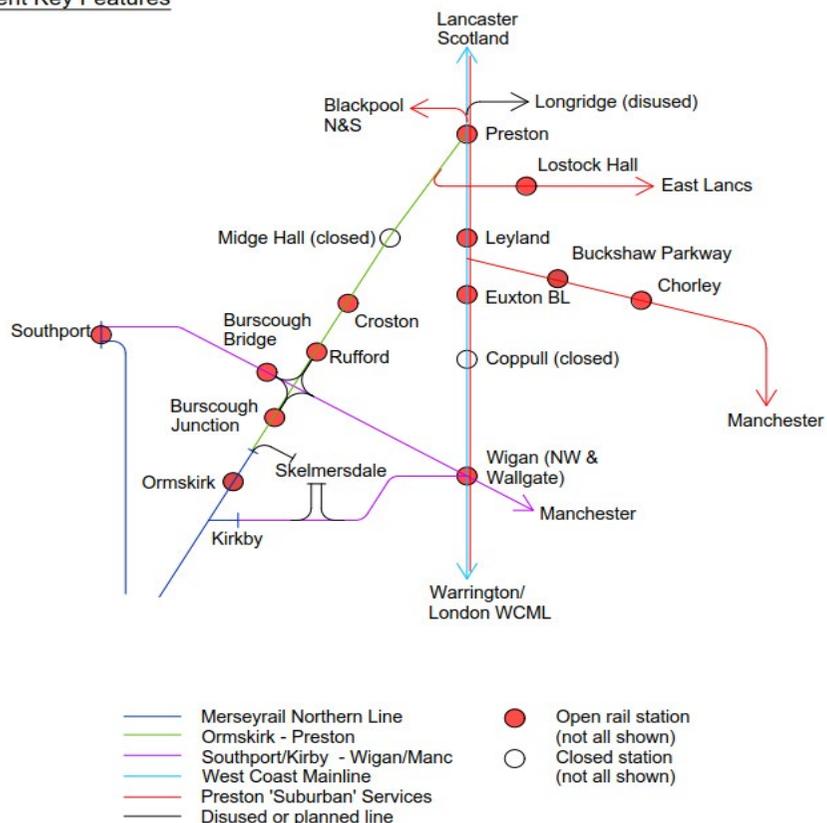
Carbon emissions by sector, Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire





CURRENT RAIL SERVICES

Rail Network
Current Key Features



	Ormskirk -Preston calling at Burscough Junction, Rufford, Croston	Southport - Wigan calling at Meols Cop, Bescar Lane, New Lane, Burscough Bridge, Hoscar, Parbold, Appley Bridge and Gathurst	Preston - Wigan (local service) calling at Leyland, Euxton Balshaw Lane,
Operator	Northern	Northern	Northern
Days of operation	Mon-Sat	7 days a week	7 days a week
Frequency	hourly	half-hourly, most extending to/from Manchester (hourly evenings? Sundays)	hourly, extending beyond Preston to Blackpool North and beyond Wigan to Liverpool
First train	0625 ex Preston 0701 ex Ormskirk	0617 ex Southport 0637 ex Wigan	0629 ex Preston 0706 ex Wigan
Last train	2237 ex Preston 2310 ex Ormskirk	2310 ex Southport 2325 ex Wigan	2243 ex Preston 0004 ex Wigan
Journey time	30-34 minutes	31 minutes	25 minutes
Rolling stock	older diesel multiple units (class 150, 153)	mix of older and new diesel multiple unites (class 150, class 195)	mix of older and new electric multiple units (class 319, class 331)
Adult return fare	£8.60	£11.90	£7,30

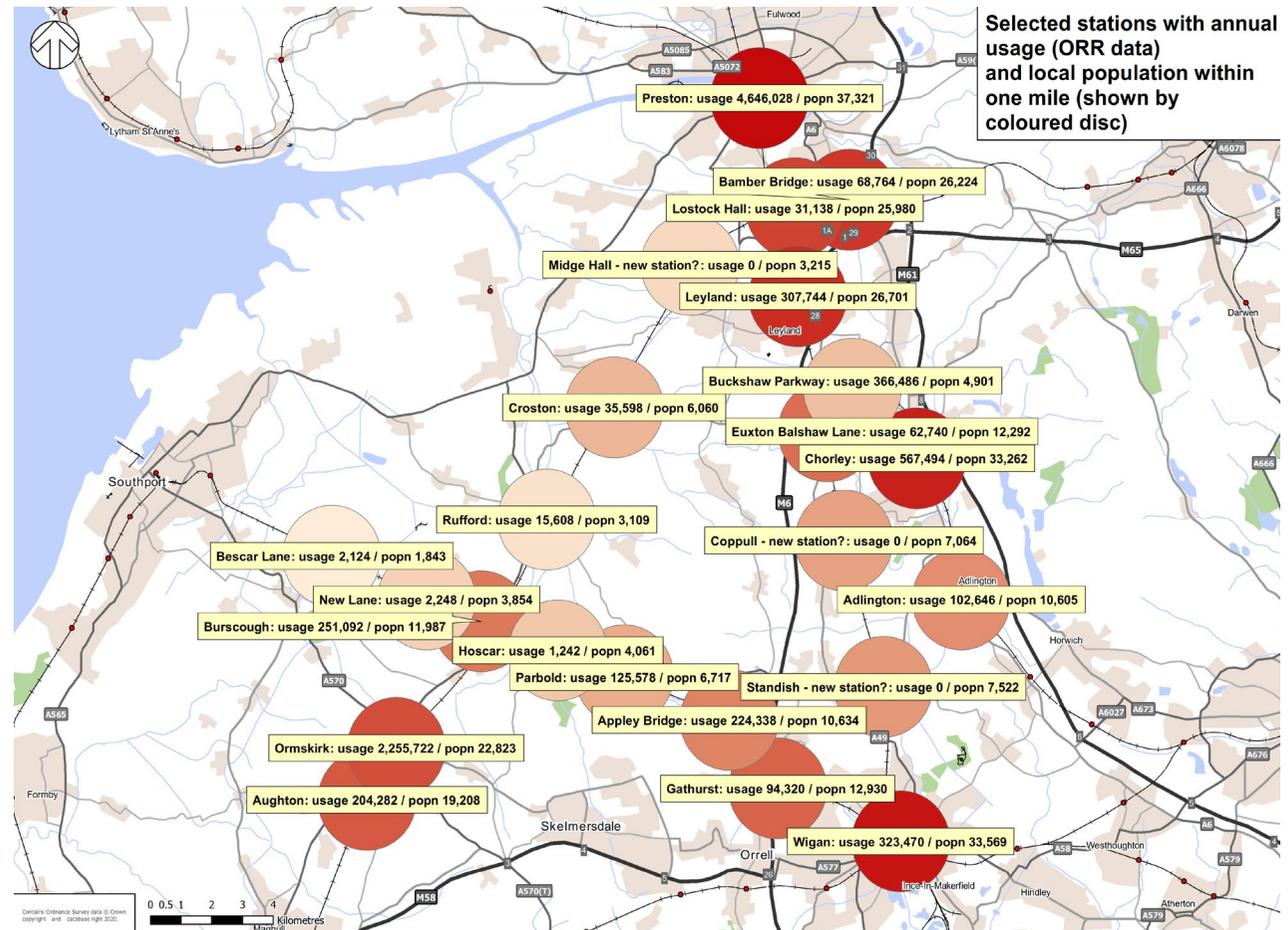
* Long-distance services operated by TransPennine Express and Avanti West Coast and serve Wigan North Western and Preston but do not call at Euxton Balshaw Lane or Leyland.



There is a relationship between the population within one mile of each station and the number of people using the station, as shown on the map. The rural village stations, particularly Bescar Lane, New Lane, Hoscar, Parbold, Rufford and Croston, serve small local populations and see low numbers of passengers. Stations serving larger towns see higher patronage. Park and ride facilities – as well as more frequent services – as at Buckshaw Parkway, for example, also lead to higher passenger numbers.

The circles around each station on the map represent the core catchment with a radius of one mile. The colour of the circle reflects the relative population, with darker circles showing larger populations, and paler circles showing smaller populations. Each station is labelled with its annual usage (2019 data from ORR statistics) and the estimate of the residential population within one mile. The busier stations see far higher passenger numbers than local population (for example Ormskirk station sees 225,000 passengers per year and the local population is 23,000). For the less busy stations, by contrast, the population exceeds station usage, meaning that each local resident uses the station less than once a year on average. For example, Hoscar station sees 1,200 passengers per year and a local population of 4,000.

We expect to see significant residential and employment growth in the area, which is likely to lead to increased demand for transport – and potentially rail in particular.



Population data: Census 2011; Station usage data: ORR 2019



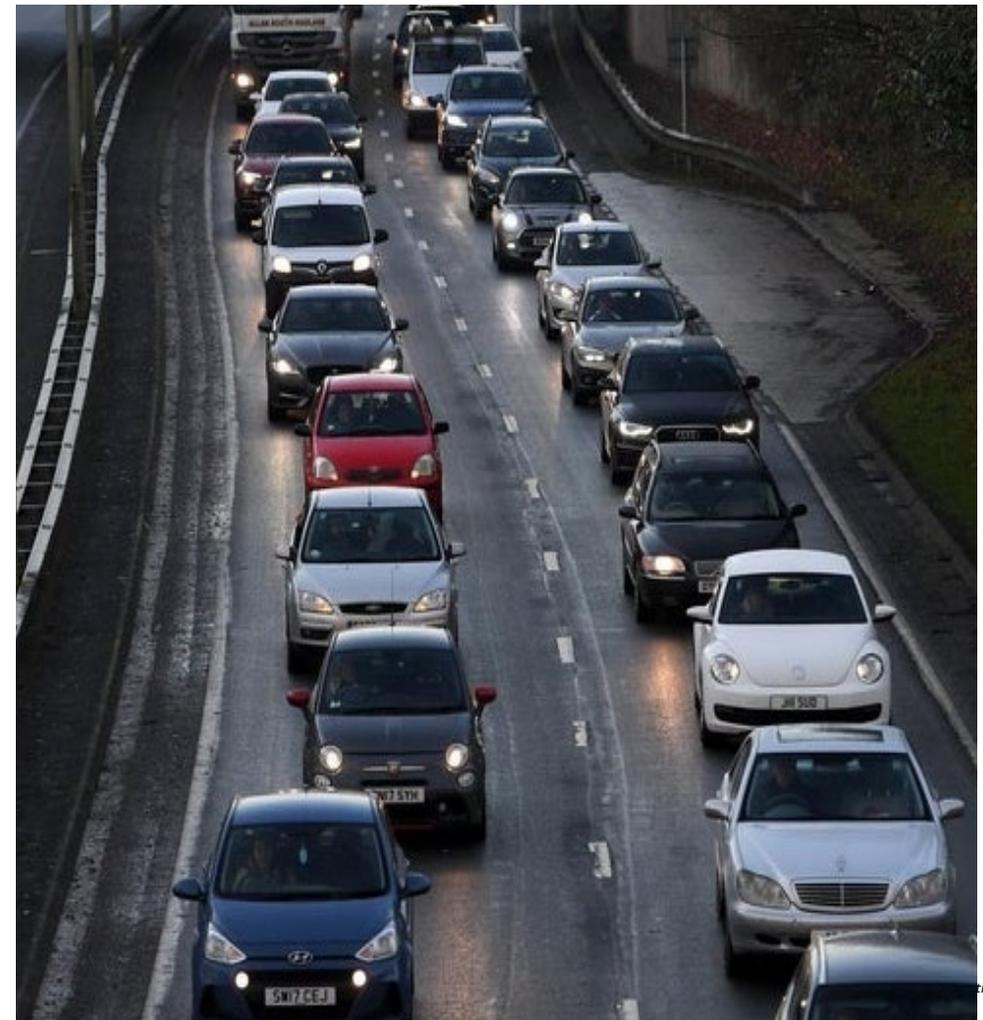
HIGHWAY NETWORK

Traffic levels on A roads in the area – in particular the A59 and A565 – are broadly static or slightly decreasing, when measured at DfT count points. This is also the case for key regional destinations, including Preston city centre, Southport, Ormskirk and Chorley town centres. This compares with an overall increase in road traffic across North West England – in particular on the region’s motorways.

It is likely that congestion at bottlenecks is causing drivers to choose alternative routes along minor roads, which are not picked up by the DfT counts - and anecdotal evidence suggests traffic levels are increasing across the region.

Many factors affect traffic levels, including economic conditions and the availability of good public transport, and although national trends show a decrease in the annual average distance travelled by car per person, increases in population tend to generate new car trips.

Should significant new development be brought forward, the area’s highway network is likely to see an increase in traffic and slower journey times – unless other modes, including public transport, walking and cycling are developed to provide attractive alternative options for many journeys.





STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Previous studies have focused on specific rail schemes without considering wider land-use and strategic transport developments, and are now in some cases out of date.

A Steer Davies Gleave study for Merseytravel in 2009 concluded that there would be some benefit from reinstating the northern Burscough curve and running a new Southport-Preston service, but only limited benefits from reinstating the southern Burscough curve and running a new Ormskirk-Southport service. Other options, including extending Liverpool services north of Ormskirk were assessed as likely to deliver poor value for money.

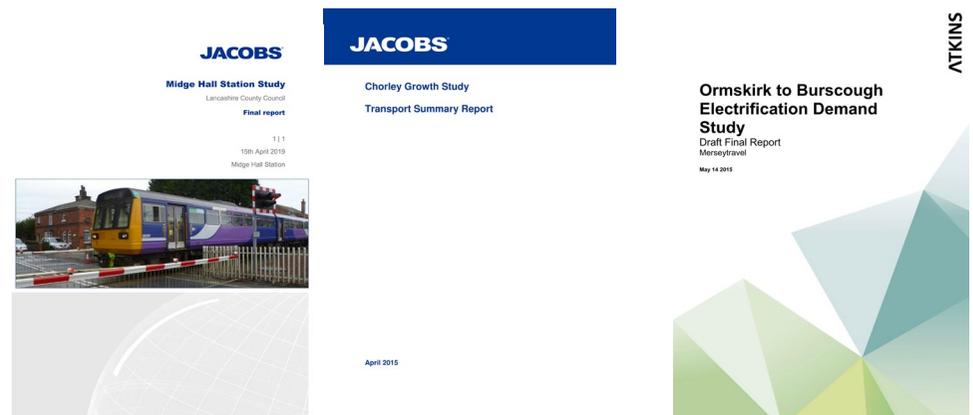
In 2015 Merseytravel commissioned Atkins to assess options for electrifying the line between Ormskirk and Burscough Junction and extending some or all Liverpool-Ormskirk services. (May 2015). All options were assessed as likely to deliver poor value for money.

Both of these studies were highly focused and are now out-of-date. The 2009 study was carried out before improvements on the Ormskirk-Preston line were completed which now allow a clockface hourly service to run, and before the recent increase in Northern timetables on the Southport-Wigan line. The 2015 study was completed before the new Merseyrail rolling stock with potential for battery powered operation were specified and ordered, which now provide greater flexibility.

A study by Jacobs for Lancashire County Council in 2019 found a marginal business case for a new station at Midge Hall, very sensitive to how many houses are built at Moss Side and how quickly, and the capital costs involved in improving rail service performance, including improved rolling stock (upgrading from one 1980s diesel – Pacers to another – Sprinters) and the removal of temporary speed restrictions. Patronage is estimated at up to 80,000 passengers per year – around double of that seen at Croston or Burscough Junction and four times higher than Rufford. This study was limited to adding a new station within current services and infrastructure and did not consider wider improvements such as new Merseyrail trains running north of Ormskirk.

As part of a wider study for Lancashire County Council in 2015 – the Chorley Growth Study – Jacobs considered the case for a new station at Coppull, and concluded that the changes needed on the West Coast Mainline (WCML) would be too expensive and complex to generate a positive business case. They recommended that any new examination of this should be in the context of new investment for HS2. Five years on, the prospects for HS2 are now clearer, and HS2 Ltd’s preparatory work identifies this section of the WCML as a key capacity constraint, and therefore in need of investment.

South Ribble and Chorley are working with Preston City Council to produce a single Central Lancashire Local Plan to cover all three areas, including the identification of potential sites to be allocated for development. It is hoped that it will be adopted in late 2023 and will cover the period to 2036. A new West Lancashire Local Plan, to cover 2023-2038, is currently in preparation, also to be adopted in 2023. This means that it is now the right time to bring propose rail improvements which can inform and support new developments – with those new developments generating new travel demand which in turns makes rail improvements more viable.





CURRENT AND FUTURE RAIL NETWORK

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct transport corridors connected into wider rail network at Preston, Ormskirk, Southport and Wigan • Area is well located, close to residential and employment in all directions (large towns and cities – Liverpool, Preston, Manchester, as well as Southport, Chorley, Wigan). This is also a challenge – travel flows are not concentrated in one or two directions, so demand is dispersed) • Local Plan public engagement activities show many people want to live in places with rail stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor rail services (slow, infrequent, not enough stations) contribute to road traffic and lead to low rail patronage • Low residential density leads to low rail patronage • Key land uses underserved eg links between hospital sites in NAME NHS Hospital Trust: Southport Hospital, Ormskirk Hospital) • Older diesel trains generate carbon emissions and other air pollution • Key infrastructure is at approaching capacity, especially WCML – and WCML is seen as higher priority for investment than local lines with low patronage • Car is more convenient for many journeys, even along existing rail corridors (eg Burscough-Liverpool: drive to Ormskirk or Maghull North, Southport-Preston)
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under-utilised infrastructure – potential for improvement • Land development bolsters case for rail – and rail bolsters case for land development • HS2 will reshape rail network – more capacity on WCML, Preston station rebuild • Potential increased demand for cross-Preston public transport • Electric, hydrogen or battery-powered trains would contribute to decarbonisation and improved air quality • Incremental infrastructure and service changes can deliver journey time and convenience improvements – and over time add up to transformational change • Create measures that address multiple problems (transport schemes that link people and places, allow interchange – thereby connecting more people with more places, service land – thereby attracting [housing/employing] more people who are then potential passengers • Encourage growth around existing and new stations to stimulate rail patronage as well as providing new homes etc • Link the case to congestion and environmental issues – particularly in context of carbon net zero pledges • Rethink service patterns, rather than being wedded to existing routes or historical routes • After the Covid-19 pandemic more flexible working patterns may lead to some people moving out of urban areas - central and west Lancashire offer pleasant living environments with good connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy rail investment is expensive • Low patronage makes it difficult to justify investment • Housing and employment development without improved public transport likely to lead to increased road traffic, longer journeys, increased carbon emissions and increased air pollution • The lines here are cross-boundary, and not necessarily top priority for any single local authority • Lack of joined up thinking for land use and transport – especially poor public transport and siting of new large sites for residential development • Changed travel patterns, reduced demand for travel and reluctance to use public transport due to Covid-19 pandemic • Perception that rail travel is expensive and complexity of fares can suppress demand



BENCHMARKS

Recent rail schemes in the North West and across the country show the benefits of improving access to the network with new stations and delivering improved services.

New stations at Buckshaw Parkway and Horwich Parkway have seen strong patronage since opening within the study area, bolstered by links to Manchester, Bolton and Preston, with somewhat lower passenger numbers at Euxton Balshaw Lane likely to be connected to the more limited range of destinations available and smaller residential catchment and nearby destinations. Maghull North, on the Liverpool-Ormskirk line, saw over 330,000 users in its first full year of operation.

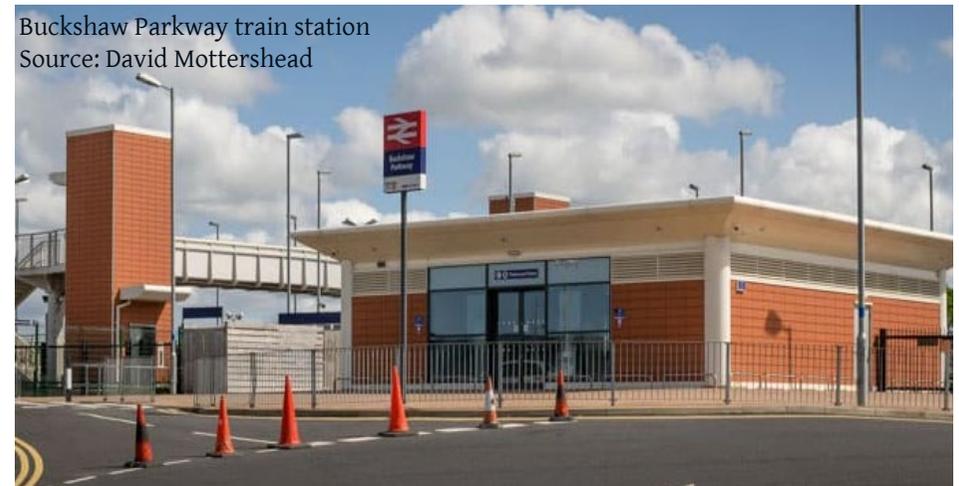
In Devon a new station at Cranbrook was built as part of the first phase of the building of a new town of up to 5,000 homes. The station – and the town – are proving so successful that a second new station is already being planned for the next stage of the town's expansion.

Incremental improvements to suburban services in the West Midlands, including electrification to Lichfield, Bromsgrove and Rugeley, along with the introduction of more frequent, regular and faster services has underpinned faster passenger growth here than in the rest of the country, with further heavy rail and light rail improvements planned.

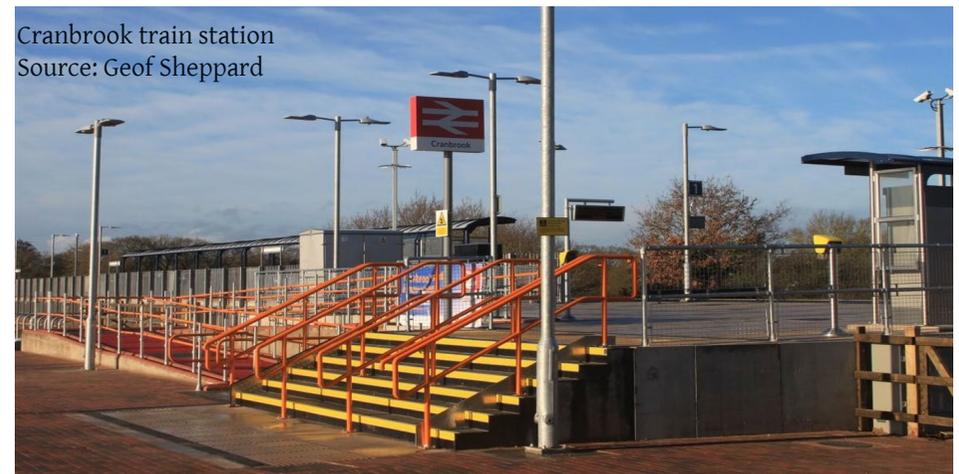
The reopening and improvement of rural routes anchored at one or both ends by city destinations has repeatedly proved to be a successful formula, including the Borders Railway from Edinburgh to Tweedbank, the Robin Hood Line (Nottingham-Mansfield-Worksop) and the Airdrie-Bathgate line.

Where a detailed business case is positive, investment in rail can be transformational for local communities.

Buckshaw Parkway train station
Source: David Mottershead



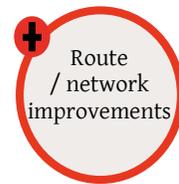
Cranbrook train station
Source: Geof Sheppard





OPTIONS

We set out options for improvements in the following categories:



ROLLING STOCK OPTIONS

As a general rule, electric operation means lower running costs, better acceleration and faster journey times, much reduced local air pollution, potential for zero carbon (when power generation into grid is zero carbon)

Type		Description	Positives	Negatives
Retained Northern trains (class 150, 156 etc)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current diesel fleet or similar from elsewhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No need for electrification Ongoing electrification and fleet renewal projects elsewhere in Britain likely to mean units will be available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NOx and carbon emissions continue Older units may be life-expired within 10-15 years
New Northern diesel trains (class 195)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New diesel trains recently introduced by Northern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality passenger experience No need for electrification More efficient than older trains Compatibility with rest of Northern fleet – flexible for operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would need to purchase additional units or cascade from other services NOx and carbon emissions continue
New Northern electric trains (class 331)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New electric trains recently introduced by Northern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High quality passenger experience Compatibility with rest of Northern fleet – flexible for operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would need to purchase additional units or cascade from other services Lines would need to be electrified with overhead wires – and these trains could not run south of Ormskirk towards Liverpool
New Merseyrail class 777		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3rd rail electric with battery capability Passive provision for retrofitting equipment to use overhead electric wiring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New trains specifically designed for Merseyrail High quality passenger experience Level platform-train access designed for Liverpool-Ormskirk Can operate over non-electrified lines Could operate with overhead electric wires (if retro-fitted) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase costs (provision in place for follow-on order by Merseytravel to complement original fleet of 52 trains) Depending on outcome of battery power trials use may require electrification



Type		Description	Positives	Negatives
Vivarail class 230		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be configured for 3rd rail or overhead electric, battery, hydrogen or diesel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible power arrangements - no electrification costs Flexible interiors - could be configured to suit local needs Coming in to use nearby on Bidston-Wrexham line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversion and reconfiguration costs (Vivarail holds fleet - ex-London Underground District Line stock)
Flex (class 769) and Hydroflex (class 799)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class 319 dual-voltage electric trains (to run on 3rd rail and overhead electric lines), reconfigured to add hydrogen or diesel power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Match Northern class 319 trains No 3rd rail or overhead electrification required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conversion and upgrade costs Older units - may be life-expired within 10-15 years
Tram-train		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vehicles which can operate as trains and as trams Trial of first UK example (Sheffield-Rotherham) is ongoing; established model in Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility of running on standard railways and on tram lines (including on street) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would need to be bought new - and designed specifically for this rail network and a specific tram network (e.g. Preston or Manchester Metrolink) Complexity of running over varied operating systems



INFRASTRUCTURE AND STATION IMPROVEMENTS

Infrastructure improvements to allow for more trains running at higher frequency (ideally every 30 minutes) and higher speeds could include:

- additional passing loops
- doubling the line
- resignalling

Station improvements could include improved waiting facilities and the provision of community facilities, ranging from click and collect parcel lockers to small retail or shared workspace units, bike or e-scooter hire points. Such improvements would help to strengthen the sense of the station being a central part of its local community and make rail travel a more attractive option.

One of many level crossings between Ormskirk and Preston



Former Midge Hall station, previously the site of a passing loop



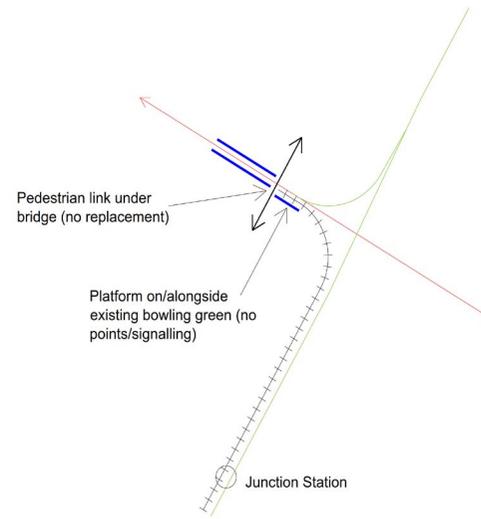
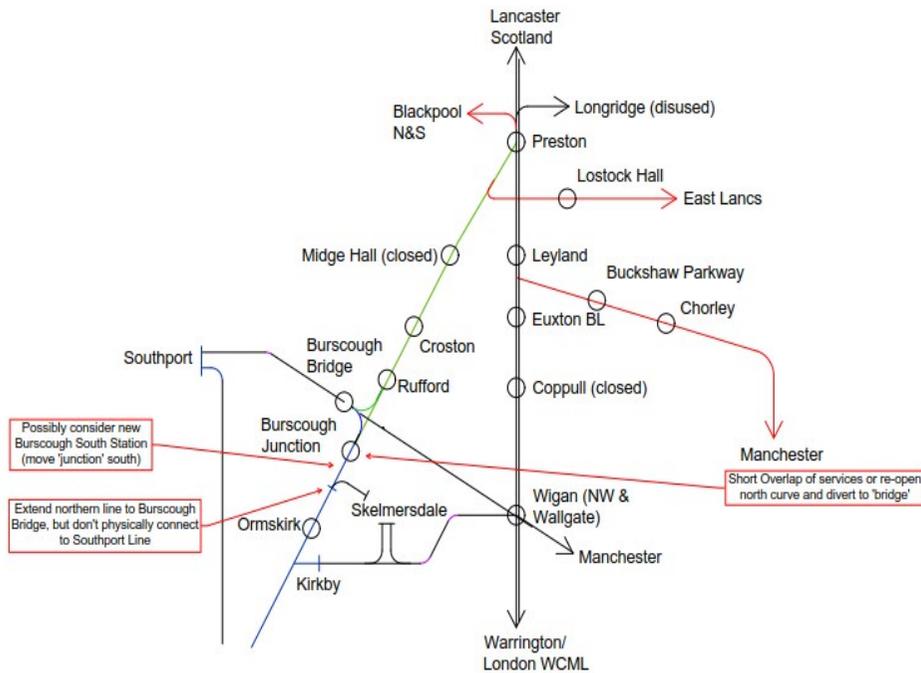
Interchange Burscough Bridge

SERVICE OPTIONS

01. UNCONNECTED MERSEYRAIL EXTENSION FROM ORMSKIRK TO BURSCOUGH BRIDGE



Diagrammatic and map-based representation of unconnected extension to Burscough Bridge



- Platform
- - - Merseyrail Extension
- Southport - Wigan Line
- Either overlap existing service from junction to Ormskirk, or add north chord to bridge only station

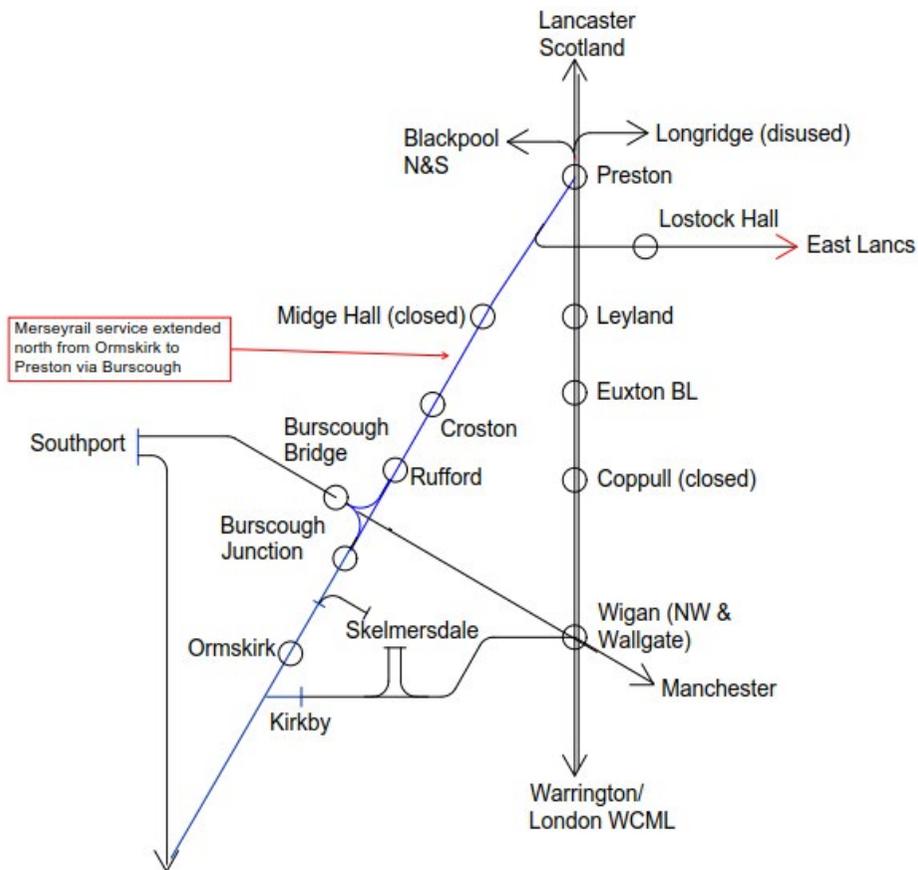
Burscough Junction



Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Moves northern terminus north from Ormskirk to Burscough. Improved Burscough-Ormskirk/Liverpool service. Liverpool-Preston journeys still required one change – so no detriment</p>	
<p>Similar to incremental Merseyrail service extensions from Rock Ferry to Hooton, then Chester</p>	<p>In LCR Long Term Rail Strategy, but not currently highest priority scheme for LCR CA/Merseytravel – political pressure and higher likely patronage are key</p>
<p>Electrification is an option – but not essential: new class 777 rolling stock with battery power could run north of Ormskirk on existing infrastructure</p>	<p>NB: trials of battery range have not yet started, so as yet unknown if 50km round trip (Ormskirk-Preston-Ormskirk) is achievable on battery power alone</p>
<p>No new track junctions or signalling required at Burscough</p>	<p>New faster Merseyrail trains will mean shorter journeys – but it is not clear if improvements will be sufficient to mean extension to Burscough could be covered by fleet, or whether additional trains would be needed (with additional running costs)</p>
<p>Reuse old trackbed, and no need to alter bridge. Bowling green and tyre company likely to be relatively easy to relocate or alter</p>	
<p>Low-cost first stage, bringing benefits and serving as building block for further incremental improvements</p>	



02. EXTEND MERSEYRAIL FROM ORMSKIRK TO PRESTON



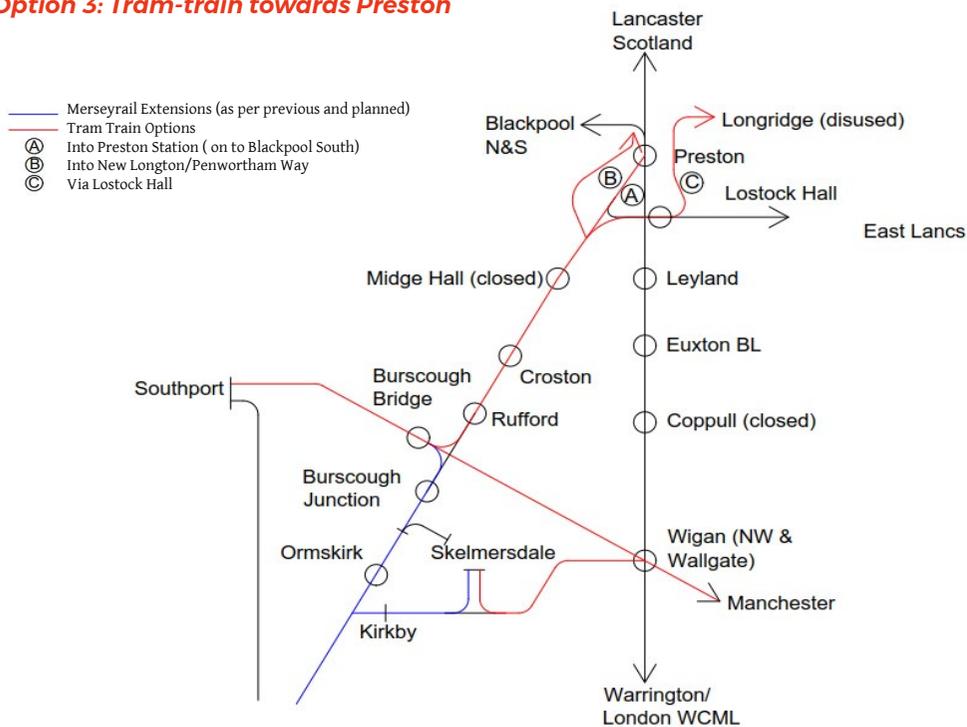
Advantages	Disadvantages
<p>Extend services from Ormskirk to Preston. Could be incremental follow-on from option 1</p> <p>Similar to incremental Merseyrail service extensions from Rock Ferry to Hooton, then Chester</p>	<p>In LCR Long Term Rail Strategy, but not currently highest priority scheme for LCR CA/Merseytravel – political pressure and higher likely patronage are key</p>
<p>Faster journeys along whole route</p>	<p>New rolling stock would be needed</p>
<p>Electrification is an option – but not essential: new class 777 rolling stock with battery power could run north of Ormskirk on existing infrastructure</p>	<p>NB: trials of battery range have not yet started, so as yet unknown if 50km round trip (Ormskirk-Preston-Ormskirk) is achievable on battery power alone</p>
<p>Improves existing infrastructure</p>	<p>Line may need to be doubled in places to allow for half-hourly service</p> <p>Congested junctions south of Preston are a constraint</p>
<p>Similar schemes in West Midlands and Strathclyde show benefits of incremental improvements</p>	<p>Like-for-like improvement to existing service does not change poor interchange at Burscough – implement this option as well as Option 1 (unconnected Burscough southern curve)</p>



03. TRAM-TRAIN OPTIONS: TOWARDS PRESTON

Converting the Burscough-Preston and Southport-Wigan and Kirkby/Upholland/Skelmersdale-Wigan lines to tram-train operation – so they could be used by trains or specially designed trams – opens up a number of options for creating a much-improved west Lancashire network, where tram-trains could leave the railway alignment and run on-street in city and town centres. Modern vehicles would make for a high-quality passenger experience, and their rapid acceleration mean that stations/stops can be located close together in urban areas, improving catchments and access to the network.

Option 3: Tram-train towards Preston



Merseytravel are considering extensions of the Merseyrail Northern Line east from Kirkby to Headbolt Lane and a new line to Skelmersdale.

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) have identified Wigan-Atherton-Manchester as a potential tram-train route.

There are three options for routing a tram-train service in to Preston.

3a: Existing rail alignment

- No new infrastructure or on-street running
- Options for services to run through Preston to Blackpool, Fleetwood or Garstang
- Capacity restricted by existing rail layout south of Preston and limited capacity at Preston station – potentially limiting frequency to hourly
- Option to build new station/stop to serve Lower Penwortham and Penwortham Lane

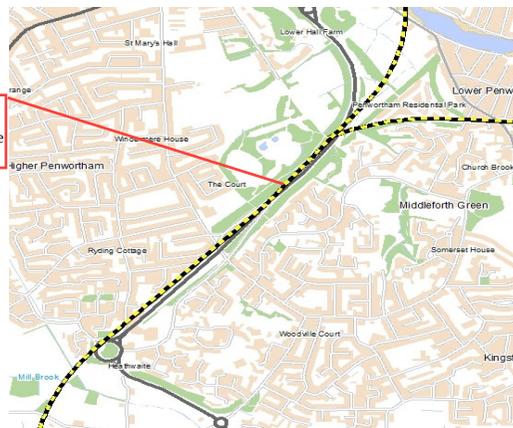
Existing rail line from Burscough (right) joining West Coast Mainline (left) south of Preston





3b: New Longton and Penwortham Way

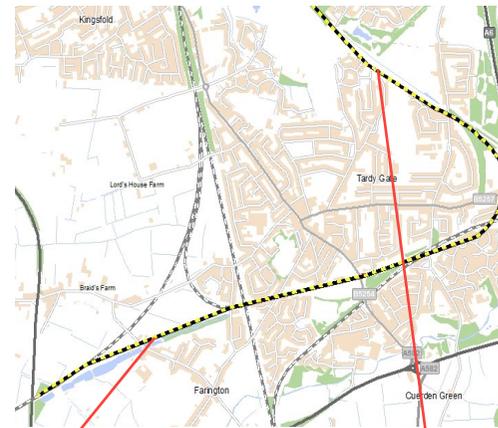
- New line to serve New Longton and run alongside Penwortham Way
- Option to cross WCML and approach Preston city centre via Avenham (possibly reusing bridge)
- Option to serve Penwortham and approach city centre from west (e.g. Liverpool Road)
- Interface with existing highways, cycleways and footpaths would need careful assessment



New tram-train line approaching Preston from south-west alongside Golden Way

3c: Lostock Hall and Avenham

- Rebuild old chord near Coot Lane and Farington and old line from east of Lostock Hall north to Avenham
- Would serve significant developments planned for Lostock Hall
- Possibility of reusing old bridge
- Interface with existing highways, cycleways and footpaths would need careful assessment



Reinstated chord near Coot Lane



New tram-train line approaching Preston from south via Avenham



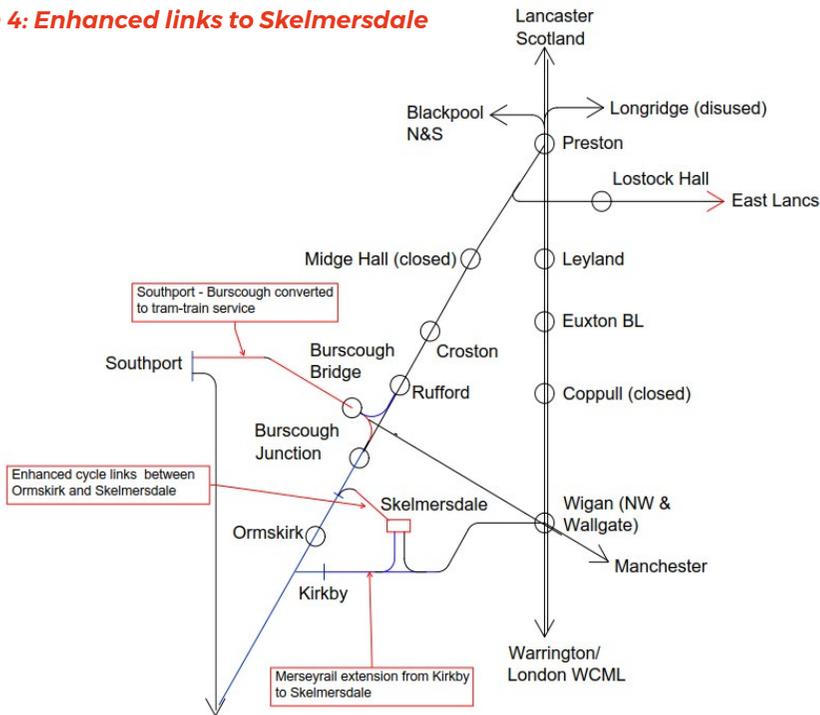
Within Preston city centre tram-train vehicles could be routed from Avenham alongside the railway station, crossing Fishergate and then continuing north to serve the area around New Square, the new UCLan Student Centre and Friargate. Tram-train services which call at new facilities at or close to Preston station, rather than using the current platforms, would ease pressure on the station.



04. SKELMERSDALE LINKS

Improved links between Southport, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale could be achieved through a combination of rail, tram-train and cycle routes. Work is progressing on developing a new station in Skelmersdale, with Lancashire County Council having bought the former Skelmersdale College site (June 2020). Assuming that the Merseyrail Kirkby branch is extended to here, then a tram-train service from Southport to Burscough and Ormskirk could be complemented by a cycle link between Ormskirk and Skelmersdale to provide a direct sustainable travel corridor. Further expansion of the Merseyrail network east from Skelmersdale, or other improvements to services there, would enhance links with Wigan.

Option 4: Enhanced links to Skelmersdale



Street-running tram in Birmingham

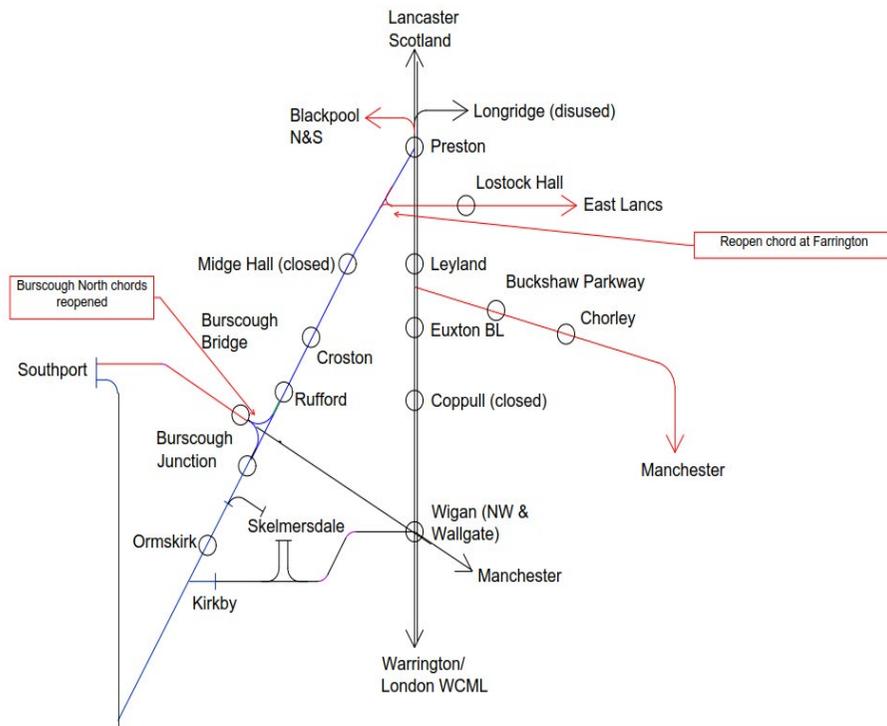




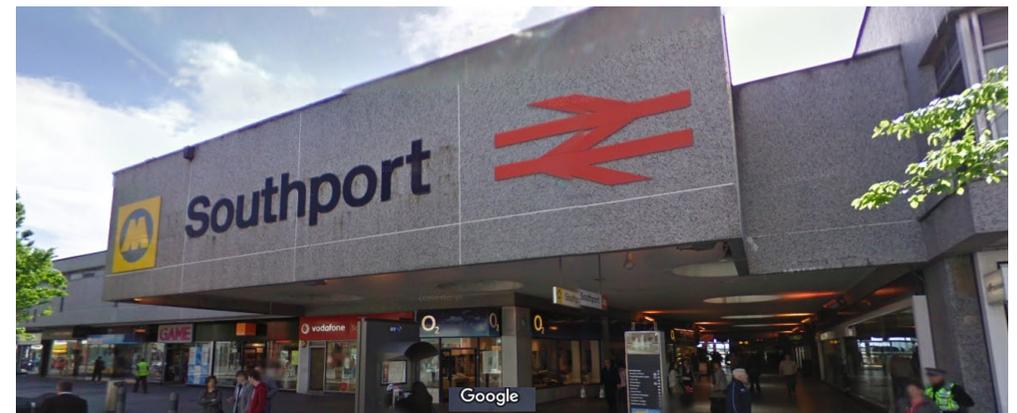
05. SOUTHPORT TO EAST LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE

In the longer term there are options to reintroduce direct services through the area to connect Southport and Burscough with east Lancashire and Yorkshire via Blackburn and Burnley. The options would require greater capital investment and incur higher operating costs.

Option 5: Southport-Burscough-Lostock Hall-East Lancashire



- Heavy rail option including reopening Burscough Curves and Farington chord to allow direct services connecting Southport, Burscough, Lostock Hall and Blackburn, with the possibility of extending to Bradford and Leeds.
- Longer-term scheme, building incrementally on other improvements
- Local markets (e.g. orbital trips around South Ribble and West Lancashire) likely to be more important than longer inter-regional trips
- Could be combined with Merseyrail extension to Burscough Bridge – making Burscough a key regional interchange hub
- Alternative option extends Merseyrail Northern Line from Kirkby/Headbolt Lane to Wigan, with Ormskirk branch diverted to access Skelmersdale from the west.
- Combines with reinstated services from Southport to Preston and Lostock Hall/Blackburn via Burscough Curves and Farington chord

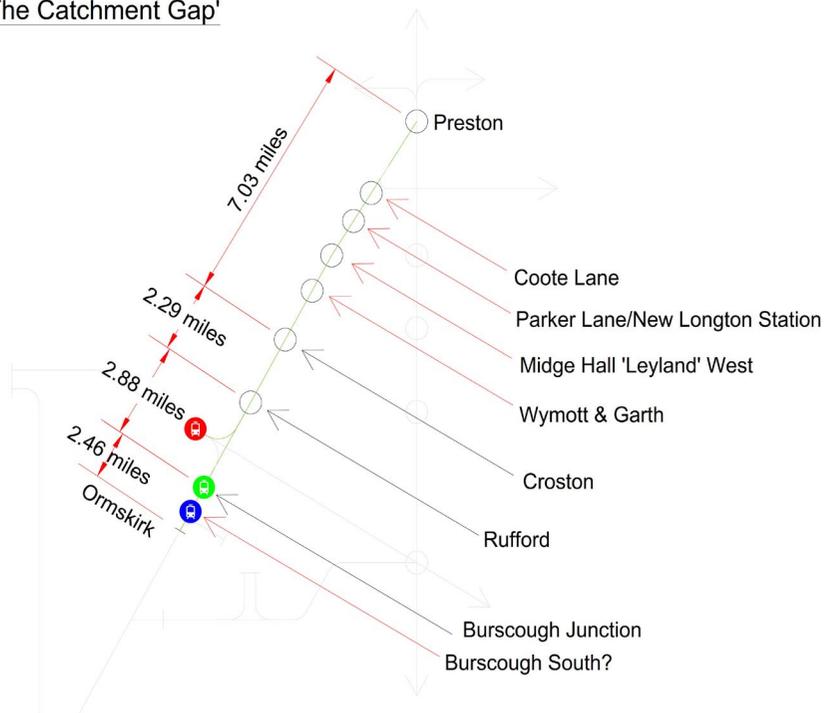




NEW STATION OPTIONS

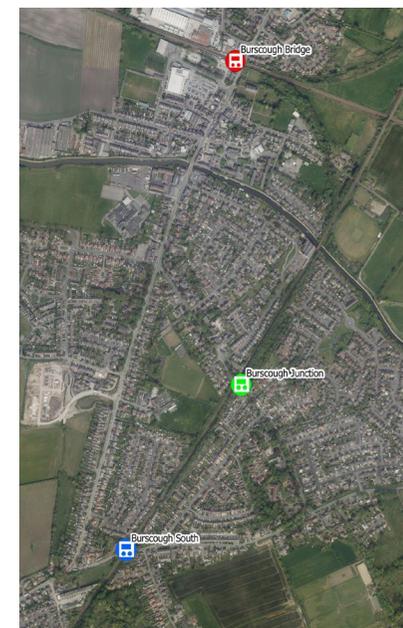
There are long gaps between stations on the Ormskirk-Preston line, especially the 7-mile gap between Croston and Preston. New stations to fill some of these gaps would help to open up land for redevelopment, as well as capturing more of the existing travel market, by putting stations closer to more people and jobs. Most of these sites could support Park and Ride facilities, either with free parking (as at most Merseyrail park and ride stations and Buckshaw Parkway) or with paid-for parking (as at Chorley and Leyland stations).

Stations (Potential)
Addressing 'The Catchment Gap'



01. BURSCOUGH JUNCTION

The current Burscough Junction station is only 900m from Burscough Bridge. As the town expands to the south, especially on the Yew Tree Farm development site, there is an opportunity to close Junction station and replace it with a new Burscough South station close to Square Lane. This would better serve the south of the town and may divert some park and ride car trips away from Ormskirk town centre.



02. WYMOTT & GARTH

HMP Wymott and HMP Garth are within 250m of the railway, although their entrances face eastwards. Staff and visitors could provide a market for a new station, although there would be significant political, security and social considerations.





03. MIDGE HALL / LEYLAND WEST

The historic fabric of the old station is still broadly intact. Since it closed in 1961 Leyland has expanded significantly west of Schleswig Way. Moss Side, as well as settlements west of the railway (Walmer Bridge, Much Hoole) may now provide sufficient catchment to justify reopening the station – perhaps as Leyland West, to give it a more recognisable name. There is strong public and political support for this.

04. PARKER LANE / NEW LONGTON

The Tank Roundabout on the A582 is a key point in the road network east of the railway, linking Penwortham, Lostock Hall and west Leyland. It is less than 500m from the track. West of the line is New Longton – presently poorly served by rail. At less than 5km from Preston city centre, there is potential to create a park & ride station here, while also improving transport connections for residents in New Longton and Midge Hall.

05. COOTE LANE

Coote Lane is 3.5km from Preston city centre and close to the strategic road network, next to major housing allocations and within walking distance of established residential populations (Kingsfold, Penwortham Lane, Tardy Gate). It could be useful as a suburban station in south Preston, given rail services at a reasonable frequency. A station here could also serve the East Lancashire Line, as an additional stop between Preston and Lostock Hall.

Moss Lane immediately west of Tank Roundabout for Parker Lane / New Longton



Aerial view of Parker Lane / New Longton area



Site of former Midge Hall station



Aerial view of Coote Lane area





COPPULL STATION

Coppull is 4.0km south of Euxton Balshaw Lane on the West Coast Main Line. The village – across the Yarrow valley from Chorley – has a population of around 8,000. West of the railway, Charnock Richard’s population of 1,700 may increase if plans are brought forward to increase housing stock.

A new station to serve Coppull relies on an increase in capacity on the West Coast Main Line. The current two tracks do not allow for a new station here.

It is recognised that this two-track section is one of the major constraints on the WCML, which will become especially acute when phase 1 of HS2 is complete and classic-compatible high speed services are using the track. HS2 Ltd are exploring options for increasing capacity here, which could include the addition of a third track or third and fourth tracks. This should increase capacity sufficiently to add a station for Coppull – just as four-tracking south from Preston to Euxton allowed for the construction of Euxton Balshaw Lane. There would be insufficient demand from Coppull for a new station to justify the considerable expense of four-tracking. Subject to detailed assessment, it is likely that the addition of one track, to provide limited extra capacity for local services, would allow the additional stop to be included in timetables without detriment to other services on the line.

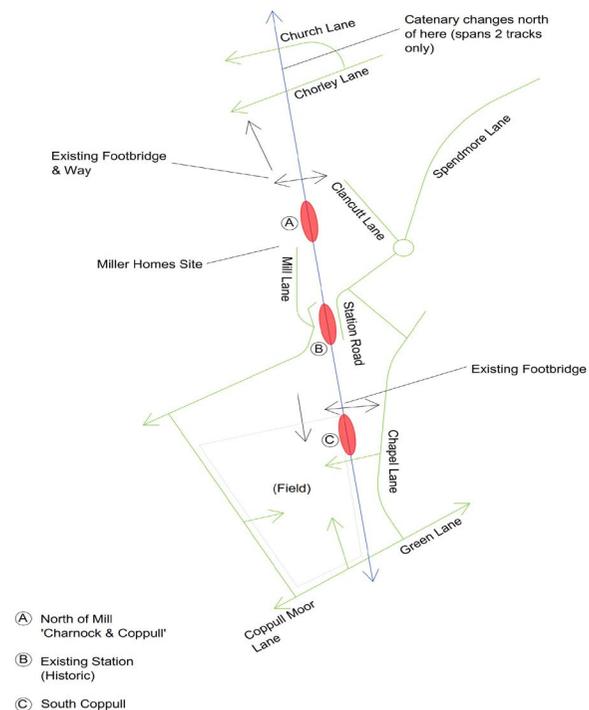
Once additional capacity is available, a new station for Coppull could be served by stopping services between Wigan and Preston, for example Liverpool-Preston/Blackpool trains. This would supplement the existing rail offer at Chorley station, on the Preston-Bolton-Manchester line and may point to a potential market for park and ride customers from the Chorley area travelling to Wigan, Preston and Liverpool. A station at Coppull could also support increased demand in the Standish area of Wigan, presenting a better alternative than travelling in to Wigan town centre. Improvements to services and a new station can serve development in the area, as well stimulating further developments.

Platforms would need to be built on the western pair of tracks, to match the layout at Euxton Balshaw Lane.

There are three options for locations for a new Coppull station:

- A. Spendmore Lane / Station Road (original station location);
- B. by Coppull Ring Mill, north of the village centre towards Charnock Richard;
- C. Chapel Lane, south of the village centre.

There is little difference in operational terms between these three sites. Option A would require the least additional track to extend the four-track section south from Euxton; option C would require the most.



Any station must have platforms on left (west) side of WCML to link with slow tracks



COPPULL NORTH

- Close to Coppull village centre, also close to Charnock Richard, increasing the catchment
- Access would be via Mill Lane, although this is narrow
- There are footpaths linking this site north to Charnock Richard and east to Clancutt Lane
- A station here could contribute to the revitalisation of the grade II listed Mill
- As the most northerly of the three sites, this would need the least additional track to be laid to make it viable in operational terms



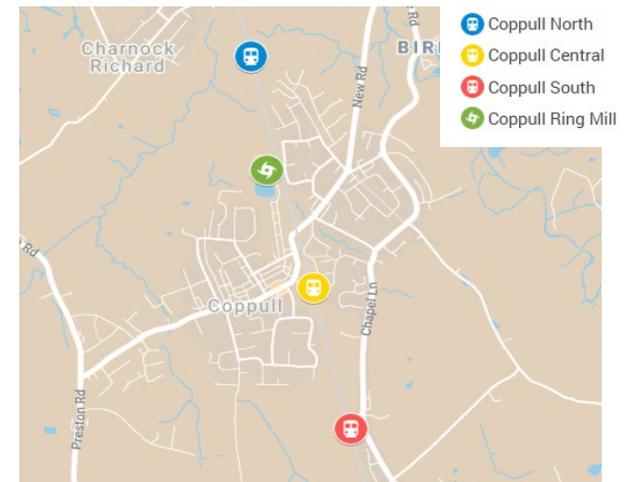
COPPULL SOUTH

- Walkable from much of Coppull, but not central
- Less intrusive for existing residents and businesses
- Access options are not as strategically well connected as at other two sites
- Undeveloped land close by is Green Belt. If land was released for station, some potential to develop land for housing and/or park & ride



COPPULL CENTRAL

- This would rebuild the station on its historic site
- Some parts of the original site are now in private ownership and built on – but with relatively low-grade uses
- Opportunity to create a new central place for the village
- Limited space to provide parking





SIFTING

A qualitative assessment generates a RAG rating for each package against each of the following five criteria:

- Connectivity – the relative extent to which the package improves connections between current and future residential areas and key destinations (cities and major towns, major employment areas, key leisure destinations) (green = greatest improvement to connectivity).
- Catchment – the current and likely future residential and workplace population within travelling distance of new stations and services (green = highest catchment).
- Operational impact – an indication of the likely impact of the package on other rail services (passenger and freight), including potential pathing and line capacity constraints, congestion at stations and impacts on reliability and punctuality (green = relatively low operational impacts on other services). Coppull options assume four-tracking on the West Coast Main Line.
- Deliverability – an early assessment of the relative ease or difficulty of putting the package into place, including some consideration of the relative capital cost of the package, land ownership, engineering constraints, potential local opposition (green = most easily deliverable).

Ormskirk-Preston station options	Connectivity	Catchment	Operational impact	Deliverability
Burscough	G	G	A	A
Wymott & Garth	A	A	G	A
Midge Hall / Leyland West	A	G	G	G
Parker Lane / New Longton	A	A	G	A
Coote Lane	G	G	G	G

Service packages	Connectivity	Catchment	Operational impact	Deliverability
1. Burscough Bridge Unconnected Extension	A	A	G	G
2. Extend Merseyrail from Ormskirk to Preston	A	G	R	A
3a. Tram-train towards Preston: existing rail alignment	A	G	R	R
3b. Tram-train towards Preston: New Longton and Penwortham	G	G	G	R
3c. Tram-train towards Preston: Lostock Hall and Avenham	G	G	G	R
4. Skelmersdale cycle links	R	R	G	G
5a. Heavy rail Southport-East Lancashire	R	A	A	A
5b. Merseyrail to Burscough Bridge and Southport-E Lancs	A	G	A	A
5c. Merseyrail to Skelmersdale and Ormskirk extension	A	A	G	R

Coppull station options	Connectivity	Catchment	Operational impact	Deliverability
North	A	A	A	R
Central	A	A	A	R
South	A	A	A	A



OPTIONS SHORTLIST

Options which show particular promise at this stage include:

- Burscough Bridge unconnected extension – a short extension of Merseyrail services from Ormskirk to a new platform east of the A59 at Burscough Bridge with access through the arches of the road bridge. This relies on either electrification or use of the new rolling stock on hybrid (electric-battery) power. This would be a relatively low-cost scheme and relatively easy to deliver. It would improve connectivity and form the first phase of a large programme of improvements.
- New station at Midge Hall / Leyland West to serve existing and planned development, provided sufficient new housing is brought forward within its catchment area to provide new demand for rail services.
- New station in the Parker Lane / New Longton / Coote Lane area, depending on the quantity and type of new housing that might be built close by.

Other options which may be feasible in the medium term include:

- Improved rail service between Burscough and Preston – either heavy rail or light rail, with advantages and disadvantages on both. This would improve journey times and connectivity for residents and workers in the area.
- New station at Coppull (to be brought forward once capacity on the West Coast Mainline is enhanced), working with Wigan Council and TfGM to explore capacity and investment options.

We recommend that the following options are currently low priority but should be revisited in the future:

- New connections and services connecting Southport and East Lancashire.
- New tram-train services between Southport, Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale.
- New station at Wymott & Garth – a low priority at present, in particular due to security issues and the limited catchment at this location.

The improvements identified here can form the first stage of a transformation in connectivity and travel opportunities for people in the area, contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions and supporting the development of new residential and employment sites.





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