

July 2025

Midlands
Connect.

The Castle Line

Connecting commuters between
Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln





James Naish,
MP for Rushcliffe, Chair of
the East Midlands APPG

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As Chair of the East Midlands APPG in parliament, I strongly support Midlands Connect’s outline business case for funding to improve the Castle Line between Nottingham and Lincoln, allowing for faster and more frequent trains along the route. The Castle Line is a critical local line, connecting many suburban and rural communities to jobs, services and opportunities in both major cities. Nottingham and Lincoln are fantastic cities, home to a diverse range of businesses and excellent universities. By better connecting them to the local communities in between, we can help to improve social mobility and drive forwards economic growth while promoting more sustainable transport choices. I fully back this proposal.”



Maria Machancoses,
CEO of Midlands Connect

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Improvements to this corridor between Nottingham and Lincoln will make life easier for businesses, communities and visitors to this area. The scheme will tackle the slow and infrequent rail services which have resulted in relatively few journeys between the two cities being made by train. The need for sustainable transport solutions is greater than ever before. This project represents the first step in attracting more passengers to use the trains, to allow further improvements in the future. Midlands Connect is committed to making the case for this strategic investment to boost the economy in the Midlands and provide a greener, sustainable transport network.”

Background

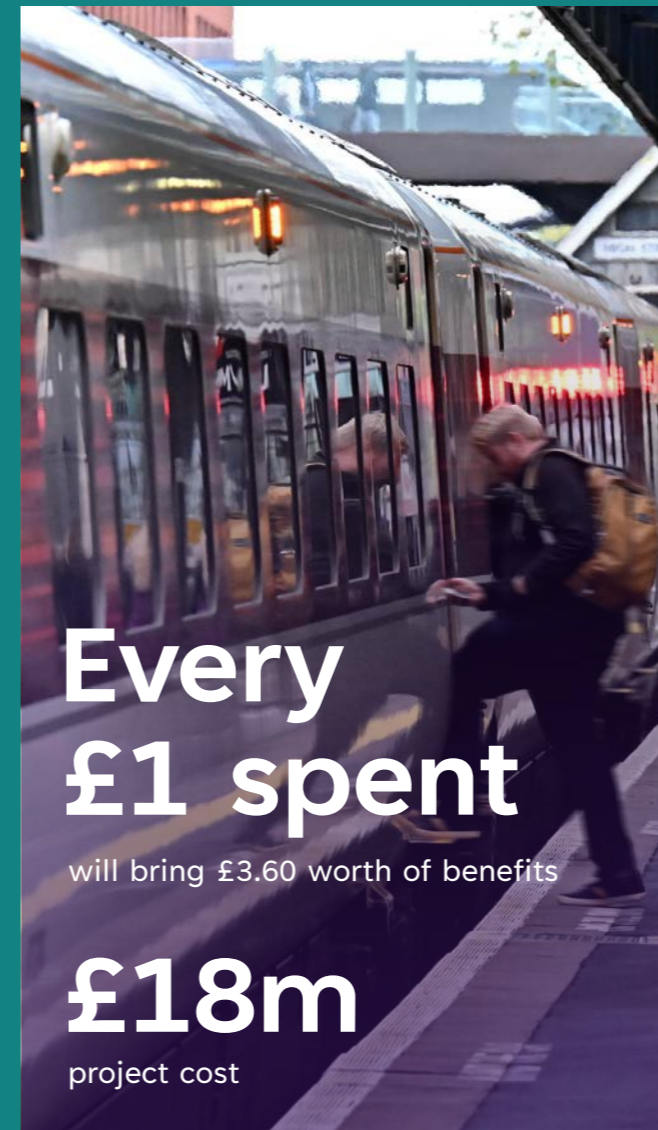
The Castle Line is a critical east-west link between Nottingham and Lincoln, serving a number of urban and rural areas such as the Gedling borough, the North Kesteven district of Lincolnshire and the more rural areas in the Newark and Sherwood district of Nottinghamshire.

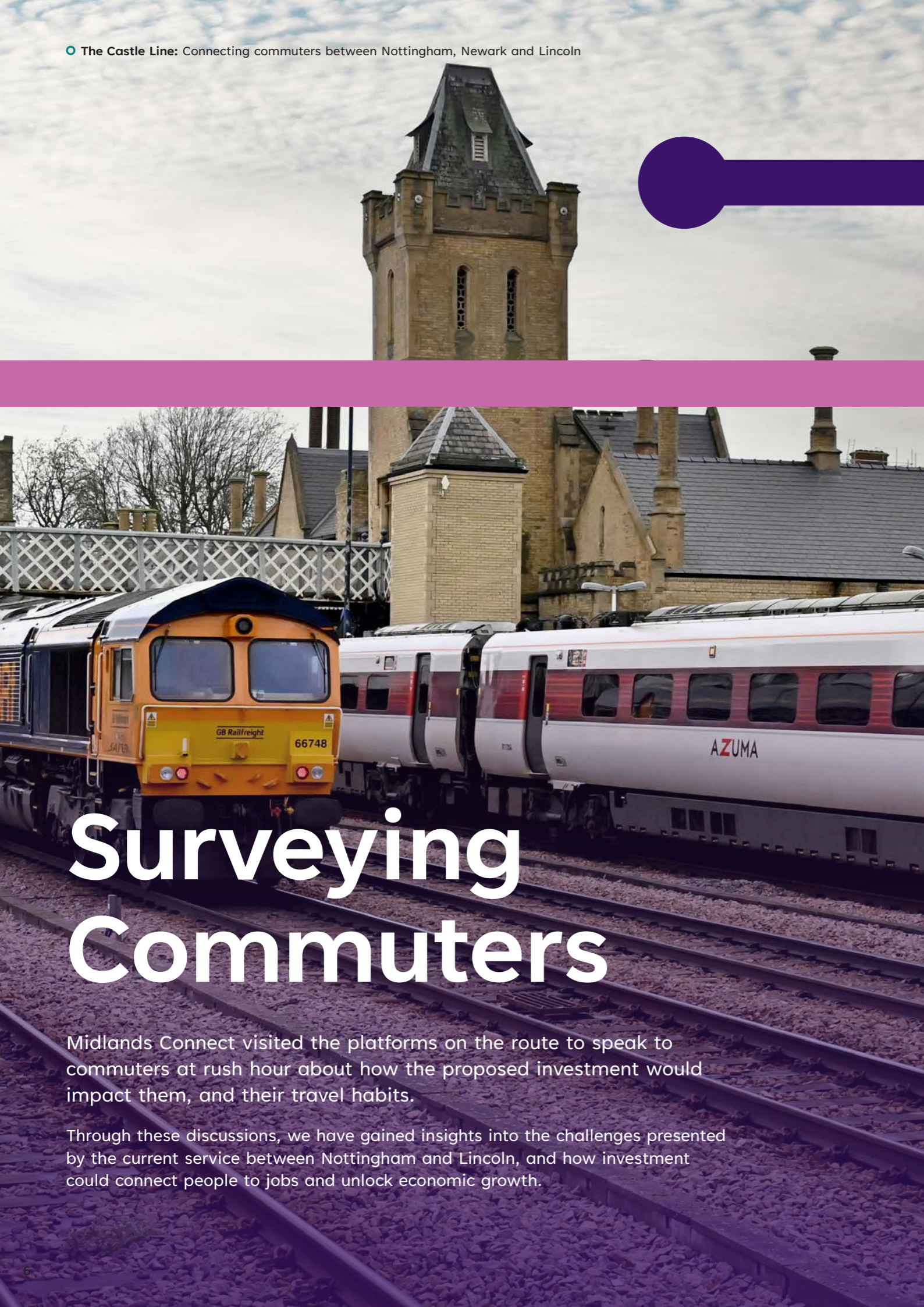
The line plays a critical role in integrating these suburban and rural communities with employment in the cities on either end of the line. But currently, only 10% of trips between these two cities are made by train.

The proposal aims to increase train speeds along the route from a typical 50mph to 75mph, improving journey times, making rail travel more attractive and reducing reliance on cars.

By improving connectivity along the route, the Castle Line could drive economic development, promote more sustainable travel and foster social mobility along the route, helping to address areas of deprivation.

The Outline Business Case was submitted in early 2023 and estimates that the project would cost £18 million and deliver a return of £3.60 in regional benefits for every £1 invested.





Surveying Commuters

Midlands Connect visited the platforms on the route to speak to commuters at rush hour about how the proposed investment would impact them, and their travel habits.

Through these discussions, we have gained insights into the challenges presented by the current service between Nottingham and Lincoln, and how investment could connect people to jobs and unlock economic growth.

“**Mo**

Delays and cramped carriages make the journey frustrating. I'd use the train more often if I could actually get on one comfortably at peak times. The connection between Nottingham and Lincoln is not very reliable. There are frequent delays, and the trains are often overcrowded. It's frustrating to see people left standing at busy times because the trains are too small for the number of passengers. Driving can be faster and more reliable, but I choose the train to reduce my carbon footprint and avoid the stress of traffic. It's essential for the government to invest in better public transport infrastructure.”

“**Rachel**

I take the train because I care about the environment, but I won't pretend it's ideal. Too few services, too many people squeezed in. We need more capacity. Absolutely, faster and more frequent trains between Nottingham and Lincoln should be a political priority.”

“**Amina**

I get the train every day for work. But the trains are too small for the number of people using them. We need more services when it's actually busy. The train is reasonably reliable but if there is an issue, especially at Lincoln, it causes me to be very late to work”

“ David

I commute between Nottingham and Hykeham to attend business meetings. Faster and more frequent trains would make my commute more efficient and enjoyable. I would be more likely to come into the city with better train services. I believe that this should be a political priority to help the economies of both Nottingham and Lincoln grow.”

“ Geoff

I get the train from Lincoln to Nottingham most days, as I work at the University. I know other members of staff and even some students get this train sometimes. I do think that the capacity needs to be expanded, if only on the services before 9am and after 4pm. They seem to be very overcrowded at these peak times and sometimes I will come in late or start early to avoid the rush.”

“ Ellie

I study at Nottingham Trent University and commute from Lincoln a few times a week. I don't own a car, so it's my only way of getting here. I used to travel in to see friends in the evening and at weekends, but I don't do it as much as I'd like because of the cost. It would be great if it were cheaper.”

“ Jordan

The connection between Nottingham and Lincoln is fairly reliable, but there are times when the trains are delayed or cancelled without much notice. This can be quite inconvenient, especially when I have important meetings to attend. I think the service could be improved with better communication and more frequent trains.”

“ John

I commute between Nottingham and Lincoln by train twice a week. The connection is generally reliable, though there are occasional delays. The main transport challenge I face is overcrowding during peak hours. I believe that improving train services should be a political priority to enhance connectivity and reduce environmental impact. Politicians are making it harder to run a car these days.”

“ Sarah

I commute between Lincoln and Nottingham by train two to three times a week for my job. The connection is generally reliable, though there are occasional delays. I sometimes drive all the way, but I prefer the train because it's more convenient and cost-effective, considering the expenses of parking in Nottingham and petrol. Faster and more frequent trains would make my commute more convenient and reduce travel time. I would be more likely to come into the office more with improved train services.”

“ Emily

Sustainability is a key concern for me, and I prefer the train because it's more eco-friendly. Faster and more frequent trains would make my commute more efficient and enjoyable. I would come into the office more often with improved train services. I think that enhancing train services should be a political priority to support sustainable transportation.”

“ Amy

The trains are too crammed and often very busy at peak times when I go to work. I usually come back early to avoid the rush.”

Conclusions

Midlands Connect has submitted an outline business case to Department for Transport proposing upgrades to the Castle Line.

○ These include:

- The core option recommended will deliver an increase in line speed from predominantly 50 mph to 75 mph.
- The long-term aim is to double the frequency of services along the route in future. (Plans to increase services to two trains an hour are expected from December this year).

Commuters outlined concern that the current rail provision between Lincoln and Nottingham is presenting a challenge to accessing employment across both cities.

People travelling for work outlined a desire to use rail to reduce climate impacts, and for convenience, but often cited feeling let down by a service they deemed insufficient, with delays and overcrowding a frequent occurrence.

Many local commuters mentioned delays to services and a lack of platform communication having an impact on their professional lives, causing them to miss meetings or be late for work.

Commuters also gave the impression that a faster and more frequent service would encourage them to visit the office more frequently, which would have an economic impact on the cities along the route. They also noted that it would help to open up access to jobs and improve social mobility in the rural and suburban locations nestled along the route.

In summary, commuters along the Castle Line felt an improved rail connection would support more sustainable transport decision making, improve access to jobs, encourage visits to the office, and reduce traffic impacts in Nottingham and Lincoln. Those spoken to resoundingly called on local politicians to prioritise investment in the line to help deliver these benefits for local communities and businesses.



