

August 2025

Midlands
Connect.

Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham

Reconnecting the Midlands by direct rail





Jodie Gosling,
MP for Nuneaton

“

People in Nuneaton look to Coventry culturally and economically, whilst a growing number are looking East to Leicester. As our town redevelops, and local businesses continue to grow it is clear we need to bolster our connection to our neighbouring towns.”



Peter Soulsby,
Leicester City Mayor

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The business case for funding to reconnect Leicester and Coventry by rail, and onto Nottingham, removing the need to change train in Nuneaton, is overwhelming.

Coventry and Leicester are located just 25 miles apart, yet only 3% of journeys between them are taken by rail. By investing in these proposals, we can bring people, businesses, and universities, across the three cities closer together, reducing congestion and cutting down carbon emissions.

A direct service could be transformational for Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham, providing job opportunities, promoting collaboration between our universities, attracting investment, and ultimately, driving forwards economic growth across the Midlands. I strongly encourage Government to back this proposal.”



Maria Machancoses,
CEO of Midlands Connect

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This scheme is so important, as we move to decarbonise transport, we must make rail the most attractive option possible. Creating direct routes between major centres is the best way to do this.

The plans will see an increase in services and a reduction in journey times for those travelling between Coventry, Nuneaton, Leicester, and Nottingham by rail; making it a more attractive option compared to driving.”

Background

Currently, just 3% of trips between Coventry and Leicester are made by train; compared to 30% of journeys made between Coventry and Birmingham. This low percentage is largely due to passengers travelling between Leicester and Coventry having to change in Nuneaton, with often the wait time being at least 30 minutes.

Direct services between Leicester and Coventry ceased in 2004 to allow for upgrades to the West Coast Main Line. This created extra traffic at Nuneaton, resulting in insufficient capacity at the station for the direct service to continue.

Midlands Connect has submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case to Department for Transport, proposing that the rail line should be reconnected, delivering faster and more frequent trains between Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham, while removing the need to change train in Nuneaton.

The proposals have received the backing of two local football clubs and a number of local universities, who believe a direct rail line, cutting journey times, would bring the cities closer together and drive economic growth, while enhancing sustainability.

Recent research undertaken by Midlands Connect sets out that the project could bring overall benefits worth £400 million, including almost £150 million in wider economic benefits for the region.



Speaking to passengers in Nuneaton

Midlands Connect visited Nuneaton Railway Station to speak to people travelling between Coventry and Leicester, who were having to change in Nuneaton.

Through these discussions, we have gained insights into the challenges presented by the current severed line, and how local people feel investment in reconnecting Coventry and Leicester by rail would help to promote sustainable transport choices, while connecting people to jobs and opportunities in the region.

“ Elaine and Pamela



We make this journey at least once every ten days to visit family based in both Leicester and Coventry. I have a car but prefer to take the train as it is more convenient and more comfortable than the bus. A direct connection would improve ours and our families lives as my children live in Leicester and my sister is in Coventry.

A direct line would be good for people in both cities and in between. It would improve job opportunities, making it easier to travel between the cities for work. It is so important these days that young people can access work and I feel that this would help people find suitable jobs more easily.”

“ Fayiza



I'm a PHD researcher at Warwick University. I think a stronger rail connection between Coventry and Leicester would be significant for the universities and their students, bringing them closer together and supporting joint research and collaboration.

It would also help people looking for jobs, allowing people to live in one city and work in the other. There are strong South Asian communities across both cities, and this direct connection would help to enhance social connectivity between the two.

I do think that Government should be investing in its rail, but not just in the connections, in the services themselves.”

Megan

I make the journey from Leicester to Coventry every day. I think that it would be beneficial for everybody if there was a direct line that connects the two cities together, as it would save everyone's time by avoiding the long wait in Nuneaton."

James



Changing trains is really challenging for people with mobility issues. Stations often aren't well equipped for older people. Direct connections make it a lot more appealing for people with mobility issues to travel, as it reduces issues with getting on and off, but also crossing platforms.

A direct link would bring the cities closer together, connecting communities with jobs and supporting shops in town centres. Government should be prioritising unlocking new routes to reverse the damage caused by the Beeching cuts.

Rail is the best way to shift lots of people efficiently and is the best way we can relieve critical congestion issues. But it needs to be more reliable."

Jacob



There is a direct bus service every ten minutes, so why can't there be a direct rail service? I had a 40 minute wait here in Nuneaton last week. But I don't drive.

If there was a direct line, it would undoubtedly encourage more people to take the train. It would benefit the cities and help to reduce the congestion in both. Government should not be wasting money and instead be looking at connecting our communities."

Emma

My partner and I use the Leicester to Coventry service regularly, with my partner travelling on it every day for work. We use the trains for ease, as it is faster than driving and more eco-friendly, but the long wait time to change in Nuneaton is off-putting.

More services would benefit lots of people, as there is more freedom to travel whenever. As well as pushing more people to consider environmental impact and choosing to travel by train. It would definitely change our travel experience for the better."

Molly and Chloe

This is our first time getting this service from Leicester to Coventry, but we are likely to start using the service once a week to visit friends and family in Coventry. When getting the train before, they are often overcrowded, meaning we have had to sit on the floor or stand, which isn't ideal."

Ella

I get the train from Leicester to Coventry for work multiple times a week. I don't drive unfortunately so the train is my only option. The change in Nuneaton is not ideal, as it means I have to get earlier trains to arrive in to work on time. This is frustrating, especially as the cities are so close together. A direct line has my full support."

Joe



I make the journey from Leicester to Coventry at least 5 times a month. It is a frustrating journey as the cities are so close. It makes no sense that people have to change. Reconnecting the line would benefit people working and commuting between the cities, saving people time every day. I do have a car, but driving and parking in Coventry is a nightmare.

Once you factor in car parking, the trains become a cheaper option. But they are often overcrowded and overcapacity, especially during winter when all the Christmas markets are on.

A direct line would promote people to use rail more which is really important if we want to reduce our carbon emissions.

People want to be environmentally conscious, but sometimes it feels like we make it harder for people to make the right decisions.

A direct rail connection would be good for both cities, proving more routes in and boosting both cities as places to visit. Government needs to realise that investment in transport has a big impact on our cities."

“ Amanda

I often use this route to see my friends in Leamington Spa. But I find changing stressful, having to lift my bags and with the risk of missing connections. Improvements to rail to reconnect cities would make a big difference to my journey. I could drive, but the train is more convenient.”

“ Paul

The big reason for me has got to be jobs. These are two big cities with opportunities but without strong transport connections, people can’t reach them.

A direct connection would improve people’s ability to live and work across the two cities. Government needs to prioritise rail improvements but the costs have to come down. At the moment it is far too expensive.”

“ John



We clearly need better local rail services to support our rural communities. Through new rail connections such as this, we can slowly reverse the impact of the Beeching cuts. I strongly believe that through rail investment, we can connect people with jobs and opportunities and drive the economy forwards.”

“ Charlie

I think that investing in rail improvements should absolutely be a government priority. You learn not to rely on the train which is a shame as it could be a great fast way to get from A to B, and an environmentally friendly way too. Though I don’t get the train often, when I do, I can understand the frustration about long wait times which sometimes lead to delays and cancellations.”

Conclusions

Midlands Connect’s plans would reinstate direct rail services between Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham for the first time in two decades.

With passengers between the cities currently having to change train in Nuneaton, Midlands Connect visited the platform to understand how a direct rail connection would impact their lives and travel habits.

Passengers expressed their frustration regarding the long wait time at Nuneaton when travelling between the cities. Passengers felt that a direct line would be more efficient, and reliable, saving them time and stress when travelling.

Many of the passengers spoken to commented that a direct line would make travelling between the cities by rail a far more appealing option than driving the car. This would in turn promote more sustainable transport choices, while also helping to alleviate pollution and congestion in each of the cities.

A number of passengers highlighted that for those with accessibility requirements the need to change trains can have a significant impact on their journey experience. This is because a change requires additional need to safely get off and on the carriage, as well as the need to tackle any movement between platforms. It was reported that a direct line would be a significant benefit for people with accessibility requirements when looking to travel between the cities.

Passengers also felt that a better connection would promote employment across the cities, widening hiring pools and making it easier for people to access more suitable roles.

In summary, passengers travelling between Coventry, Leicester and Nottingham by train thought the reinstatement of a direct line would support more sustainable transport choices, widen hiring pools, reduce urban traffic congestion, and promote rail travel for those with accessibility requirements.

As a culmination of these, people felt that the reconnection of the line would help to bring Coventry and Leicester closer together economically and culturally, and that Government needed to prioritise the project as part of its regional transport investment.

Midlands Connect submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case to the Department for Transport in Spring 2025 and should this be successful, the next stage will be the submission of an Outline Business Case. This will require more detailed work on the engineering aspects of the project, as well as further investigation into the benefits.

