

Vital east-west rail freight link could spare hundreds of HGVs

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Progress on a freeport-boosting east-west freight rail line is being pushed, with the potential to take hundreds of HGVs off the M62 eyed.

Cleethorpes and Immingham MP Martin Vickers, whose constituency the largest port in the Humber cluster sits in, has met with Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris to underline the value of such an infrastructure undertaking.

Speaking after, having raised it in the Commons as electrification of regional lines was also flagged, Mr Vickers said: "It is an issue I know is being worked on, I spoke with Chris Heaton-Harris after, and ABP, the ports association and a number of other stakeholders are lobbying on this. They are trying to make progress with it and he told me he would keep me posted on developments, and I'll keep pushing back.

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"He is very conscious of the need for this east-west freight corridor. Not only would it be beneficial to industry and the development of the [freeport](#), it would potentially take a lot

of HGVs off the M62, which is another bonus. We will keep the pressure on.”

University of Hull conducted a £1.5 million study on Liverpool-Humber Optimisation for Freight Transportation, with the potential to ease freight movement north and south by promoting northern ports for UK-bound freight – another major factor with huge reductions in road miles.

It comes as gauge enhancements have been made between Immingham and Doncaster, while electrification of road freight on the same route is also being taken forward.

A total of [£50 million has been invested to boost capacity at Humber Container Terminal](#), covering Immingham and Hull.

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Responding to an initial question posed by Mr Vickers – keen to maximise the impact of [freeport status he championed](#) – in the House of Commons debate, Transport Minister Andrew Stephenson, said: “We recognise the importance of rail freight, and of supporting all the newly announced freeports.”

Hull North MP Dame Diana Johnson had raised the issue of this coming November being five years since a £94 million scheme to electrify 70 miles of track between Hull and Selby was blocked, while Wigan to Bolton was backed. She said the economic case was stronger in Yorkshire than Lancashire, questioning what the Conservative government had against the area.

Mr Stephenson, who had told how “options for routes into Hull are being considered as part of the integrated rail plan, which will be published soon,” didn't engage in the latest ‘battle of the roses’, instead pointing to the delivery of 700 miles of electrification in the past three years, compared to 63 miles under 13 years of the previous administration, adding “We will take no lessons from the Labour party on electrification”.

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