

Transport for the North Rail North Committee Agenda

Date of Meeting	Monday 15 July 2024
Time of Meeting	11.00 am
Venue	Boardroom, GMCA Offices at Tootal Buildings, 56 Oxford Street, M1 6EU

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Item No.	Agenda Item	Page
1.0	Welcome and Apologies The Chair to welcome Members and Members of the public to the meeting. Lead: Chair	
2.0	Appointment of Committee Chair and Vice Chairs Members to appoint a Chair and a Majority and Minority Party Vice Chair to the Rail North Committee. Lead: Julie Openshaw	
3.0	Declarations of Interest Members are required to declare any personal, prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interest they may have relating to items on the agenda and state the nature of such interest. Lead: Chair	
4.0	Minutes of the Previous Meeting To consider the approval and signature of the minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record and to consider any requests for updates on matters contained therein. Lead: Chair	5 - 18
5.0	Rail Accessibility Task and Finish Group To consider the update on the work of the Task and Finish	19 - 24

	<p>Group and the outline next steps.</p> <p>Lead: David Worsley</p>	
6.0	<p>Rail North Partnership Operational Update</p> <p>To consider the update on operational rail matters, and the updates from the train operators.</p> <p>Lead: Gary Boagan and David Hoggarth</p>	25 - 40
7.0	<p>Train Operating Companies Annual Business Plans 2025/26</p> <p>To consider the update and overview of the process for shaping the Northern and TransPennine Trains business plans for 2025/26 and to approve the Transport for the North strategic priorities for input into the Annual Business Plan process for the train operator 2025/26 business plans.</p> <p>Lead: Caroline Young</p>	41 - 46
8.0	<p>Date and time of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 3 September at 10.30am</p>	
9.0	<p>Exclusion of the Press and Public</p> <p>To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Items 10 on the grounds that:</p> <p>(1) It is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during such item(s), confidential information as defined in S100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them in breach of the obligation of confidence; and/or</p> <p>(2) it / they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the Paragraphs [listed below] of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.</p>	
10.0	<p>Private Minutes of the Previous Meeting</p> <p>To consider the approval and signature of the private minutes of the previous meeting as a correct record and to consider any requests for updates on matters contained therein.</p> <p>Lead: Chair</p>	

Rail North Committee Minutes

**Wednesday 21 February 2024
Virtual**

Present:

Attendee	Local Authority
Mayor Andy Burnham (Chair)	Greater Manchester Combined Authority;
Cllr Craig Browne	Cheshire East;
Cllr Rupert Swarbrick	Lancashire;
Mayor Steve Rotheram	Liverpool City Region;
Cllr Martin Gannon	North of Tyne
Cllr Paul West	North of Humber
Cllr Stephen Harker	Tees Valley;
Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	West Yorkshire Combined Authority;

Also in Attendance:

Lord McLoughlin (Observer)	Chair of Transport for the North Board
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Partners in Attendance:

Andy Mellors	Avanti West Coast
Ben Simkin	Cross Country
Phil James	Network Rail
Nick Donovan	Northern
Chris Jackson	TPE
Graham Meiklejohn	TPE

Officers in Attendance:

Name	Job Title
Martin Tugwell	Chief Executive
Gary Rich	Democratic Services Officer
Katie Day	Director of Strategy Policy and Communication
Paul Kelly	Finance Director
Julie Openshaw	Head of Legal
Chris Roberts	Head of Programmes TPE
David Hoggarth	Head of Strategic Rail
Charlie French	Investment Planning Manager
Gary Bogan	Rail North Partnership Director
Darren Oldham	Rail and Road Director
David Worsley	Rail Strategy Manager
Caroline Young	Senior Project Manager
Joanne Barclay	Senior Solicitor

**Item
No:****Item****1 Welcome and Apologies**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. In opening the meeting, he outlined the issues that the Committee will discuss specifically highlighting the operator updates and the station accessibility. He commented that whilst there is still a lot of work to do on this issue, he is encouraged by the start the Task and Finish group have made on this and are beginning to examine this area more deeply.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Cllr Kilbane, Mayor Coppard and Cllr Renwick.

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of Interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 were considered for their accuracy.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 be noted.

It was noted that Lord McLoughlin attended the meeting as an observer.

4 Accessibility Task and Finish Group - Initial Output

- 4.1 The Chair expressed his gratitude to Members of the Committee who have been involved in the task and Finish Group.
- 4.2 Members received the report from the Rail Strategy Manager who then outlined the key aspects of the report.
- 4.3 The Chair highlighted to the Committee the unacceptable amount of time it will take to have all stations fully accessible if work continues at the current pace. He suggested that a 10-year deadline should be set for completion of this work.
- 4.4 On the £1.5 billion cost of completing this work, the Chair stressed the importance of being creative through station devolution with local authorities and local areas taking control of stations, as well as ways of attracting new investment to help offset some of the costs.
- 4.5 He stated that a clear proposal needs to be put to the next Government outlining the North's intention and the importance of this work being done consistently and within the requirements of the Equality Act.
- 4.6 Cllr Swarbrick agreed with the Chair that the timelines were too long but that this is also the case with a ten-year timetable. He informed the Committee that during the Task and Finish Group he pushed for work to start on some of the "quicker wins" where work can be done out of

- existing budgets and stressed the importance of working creatively in order to generate the required funds.
- 4.7 The Chair highlighted that just 43% of stations in Greater Manchester are fully accessible and he expects that this is the case in stations across the north. He stressed that on such an important matter a timetable of 20 years or longer is simply unacceptable and sends a message to disabled people that they aren't important.
- 4.8 Cllr Browne cautioned against losing sight of existing commitments and asked if confirmation can be gained on the position of the delivery of accessible projects, which Network Rail and DfT have already confirmed.
- 4.9 He highlighted two examples of stations within his area and requested clarity on their situations.
- 4.10 The Head of Strategic Rail stated that this is being considered by the Task and Finish group, and they want to understand what the commitments are in order for this to form part of the base assessment being undertaken.
- 4.11 The Chair requested that "quick wins" be explored as soon as possible and asked that they should also be considered in the light of a devolution proposal, highlighting that where there is regeneration potential around stations and where a local area has ambitions for regeneration around stations then this context needs to be taken into account.
- 4.12 In response the Rail and Road Director stated that this will be incorporated. Additionally, whilst a five-year timeline for "quick wins" has been established, the group will look again at this to ensure that devolution aspects are fully incorporated.
- 4.13 The Chair suggested that Members put forward names of stations in their areas which they would like to be included as a "quick win" and that if there is a devolution angle this should also be included.
- 4.14 Mayor Rotherham commented that this issue must be pushed up the political agenda in Westminster and that the support of both main political parties is vital in achieving the improvements required. He also suggested that local MPs should be lobbied on this issue.
- 4.15 The Chair suggested that a list of ongoing schemes coupled with "quick win" schemes and stations suggested by constituent authorities be compiled into a list and presented to MPs as the first phase of a 10-year programme to deliver accessibility at stations, the list to be ready for the commencement of the next Parliament.
- 4.16 Lord McLoughlin agreed with the Chair and commented that a list would allow the Committee to be more public about its ambitions and the requirements needed to make stations accessible.
- 4.17 He informed the Committee that the Government has published the Bill on the future of the railways and explained that it is currently at the consultation phase and will be scrutinised by the Select Committee, with TfN preparing evidence to present to the Select Committee on this matter.

- 4.18 The Chair suggested that at the next Board Members discuss the draft legislation as well as any submissions that might be made to the Select Committee both from an operations and an infrastructure in stations point of view.
- 4.19 In summarising the Committee’s conversation the Chair stated that there needs to be a 10-year deadline for this work as well as “quick wins” which need to be completed in the early part of the next Parliament. Additionally, there needs to be a schedule outlining how the work will be carried out over the next 10 years and how many stations will need to be worked upon annually in order to achieve this goal.
- 4.20 The Rail Strategy Manager stated he can work on an output for five and ten year programmes. He added that there is already information available on the likely costs which will help with the development of profiled expenditure which he will look to include in the June report. He also welcomed information that constituent authorities could provide on local stations as this will help to inform the work.
- 4.21 On the estimated £1.5 billion cost, the Chair commented that much of that could be offset, through creative ways of maximising the use of station assets, land around stations and building regeneration around them.
- 4.22 Building on the Chair’s comments about stations being fundamental to their communities and businesses, the Chief Executive explained that the draft business plan for 2024/25 emphasises the importance of drawing on the knowledge and skills that exist within the technical teams in TfN of which this work is another example.
- 4.23 He informed the Committee that he is reassured and energised by how the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) has engaged with TfN on this issue and believes that this bodes well when preparing for the next spending review. He also believes that the strong relationships that TfN has within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on a placed based approach will help put the North at the forefront on work around practical requirements.
- 4.24 He highlighted the strong linkages around this theme and stated that the point is around accessibility for all from an economic, environmental and societal perspective.
- 4.25 The Chair agreed with the Chief Executive and hoped that this will lead to greater thinking about place base on the railways and on rail assets.
- 4.26 Commenting on the number of stations across the North that are accessible, the Rail and Road Director noted Mayor Rotheram’s observation as to the level of accessibility in the Liverpool City Region and commented that in other parts of the North they may be below average but the figures in the Liverpool City Region may be masking this. He stated that the figures would need to be scrutinised further.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes and supports next steps for accelerating delivery of station accessibility improvements in the North

- 2) That the Committee supports the provisional recommendations which were agreed at the first meeting of the Accessibility Task & Finish Group, namely:
- The Terms of Reference of the Task & Finish Group should be expanded to include:
 - Assembling sufficient accurate data about current accessibility provision to enable the prioritisation of future works and the monitoring of their completion
 - Considering wider inclusivity issues (such as safety concerns) which may deter some groups from travelling by rail
 - The audit of accessibility provision which was recently undertaken by Atkins on behalf of the Department for Transport shall be the primary source of information as to the current status of our infrastructure (subject to devising technical solutions for simplifying the large amount of data which was gathered)
 - In order to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of work to improve accessibility, the various parties involved (Train Operating Companies, TfN, Network Rail, Great British Railways, Local Transport Authorities) shall establish joint teams, so that staff with the necessary expertise can cooperate, co-locate and build momentum for the necessary enhancements.

5 Rail North Partnership Operational Update

- 5.1 Members received the report from the Rail North Partnership Director. The Committee then received updates from CrossCountry, TPE, Northern and Avanti West Coast Mainline.
- 5.2 Members received the presentation from Mr Ben Simkin (Cross Country) who provided an update on the current situation.
- 5.3 Chair asked Mr Simkin how CrossCountry is handling the issues regarding half term and how it is communicating with customers to inform them about any problems.
- 5.4 Mr Simkin explained that when it is known that trains will need to be cancelled, the approach tends to be to protect the long-distance intercity journeys and focus more on regional services for cancellations, which was the approach during the February half term. He went on that information is put on the website where there are dedicated landing pages, and social media is also used. He acknowledged that there are challenges across the industry about how disruption is communicated to passengers and there is a lot of work taking place on how this can be improved and exploration of how new technologies can be used to help.
- 5.5 Regarding the disruption graph in the presentation Lord McLoughlin asked if there is a way of breaking down the cancellations that occurred as a result of issues at CrossCountry and those that were result of external factors.

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- 5.6 Mr Simkin explained that the graph shown is only the disruption relating to their train crews and trains and does not include disruption as a result of external factors. He offered to consider this further in order to provide the additional information being requested.
- 5.7 The Chief Executive explained that through the Rail North Agreement there is a contractual relationship between TfN, the DfT, Northern and TPE where TfN engages in the train operators' annual business planning processes and the Chief Executive sought the agreement of CrossCountry to establish a similar arrangement with them.
- 5.8 Mr Simkin agreed to this in principle and commented that such an agreement will enable TfN to advocate for CrossCountry. He stated that he would need to work out the timelines to understand when the best time to involve TfN will be.
- 5.9 Mr Chris Jackson then provided an update on TransPennine Express. He reported that the temporary timetable introduced in mid-December is performing well and that cancellations caused by train crew are now fewer than 5% with "P code" cancellations all but disappearing. Overcrowding and complaints about overcrowding are also down. Whilst informing the Committee that customer satisfaction is now 86% he acknowledged that there is still further work to do in order to win back trust and confidence.
- 5.10 The temporary timetable changes have also allowed for an acceleration in driver training which has also led to an improvement in day to day delivery at the same time.
- 5.11 As a result of the improvement in performance the Committee was informed that there will be an uplift in the timetable from June that will see an increase from 34 to 40 trains per day on the West Coast Main Line. This will provide more services between Greater Manchester and Merseyside to Lancashire, Cumbria and Scotland. There will also be additional trains between Liverpool and Manchester to cater for the night time economy, and additional peak weekend summer services between York and Scarborough. He believes that these are a sensible spread of service reintroductions that will provide benefits across the north.
- 5.12 He then outlined plans for the December 2024 timetable change, where TPE will look to reinstate route services which were suspended in December 2023 as well as looking to bring forward the plan to transfer the Leeds to Huddersfield service to Northern with a gradual transfer introduced where the operation of these services will be shared between Northern and TPE.
- 5.13 TPE will also look to improve the connectivity between Newcastle and Northumberland from December as there will be an increase in Newcastle to Edinburgh services from 6 to 8 trains a day, roughly every two hours.
- 5.14 The Committee was also updated on the rest day working agreement where negotiations have begun to extend this for a further 12 months which will be used to carry out outstanding driver training.
- 5.15 Noting the improvement of TPE and the pending reintroduction of services, the Chair asked whether the improvement will be sustainable

- with the reintroduction and whether “PPM” (Public Performance Measure) figures and cancellation figures can be maintained.
- 5.16 Mr Jackson stated that he would not be advocating an increase in services in June if he did not believe that TPE could operate those services reliably and sustain them until December 2024, as well as delivering the December uplift which is being promised. He explained that this is reliant on an extension to the rest day working agreement, but that he is confident that this will happen.
- 5.17 Cllr Hinchcliffe asked for the rationale behind the services that had been chosen are being re-introduced. She also referred to overcrowding and sought reassurance that the initial concerns that service reductions had not led to overcrowding. She asked to see any that they may have that illustrate this. Additionally, she enquired about the current situation with regards to rolling stock.
- 5.18 Explaining the rationale behind the reintroduction of certain services in June, Mr Jackson reminded the Committee of the tests set at the end of 2023 and noted that some of those tests had been passed at some of the depots, but not at York and Manchester Piccadilly where the training burden is greater. The uplifts have therefore been focussed on routes where there is confidence that they will be able to sustain and deliver services reliably from June.
- 5.19 Addressing the issue of crowding, Mr Jackson informed the Committee that a weekly report is shared with officers and within this report the issue of crowding and complaints about crowding is covered. He reassured the Committee that overcrowding has reduced compared to the situation with the old timetable, and this is being monitored.
- 5.20 Regarding rolling stock Mr Jackson explained that the operating companies have really been listening on this issue and they are able to specify the types of trains that they want to operate rather than this being specified by people far removed from the north. He further stated that the correct people are being consulted and they are using the correct contacts and connections with stakeholders and customers and accessibility groups with the result that trains are fit for purpose. They are working closely together with Northern on this matter.
- 5.21 Cllr Hinchcliffe sought confirmation that it is York depot that is stopping more services being reintroduced in Leeds.
- 5.22 Mr Jackson confirmed that this is the case in York and at Manchester Piccadilly and is the reason why in West Yorkshire from June they have only been able to commit to uplifting services from four to six trains per day. He explained that he would have liked to have done more but was unable to do so as it could not be achieved reliably.
- 5.23 The Chair was pleased to see that the update showed progress and hoped that this will be sustained.
- 5.24 The Chair informed the Committee that this will be Mr Donovan’s last meeting and acknowledged the work he has done to improve Northern over the last few years.

- 5.25 Mr Nick Donovan thanked the Chair and informed the Committee that the Tricia Williams will be taking over from him and that a handover has already begun; like him, she will be committed to providing same transparency, openness and engagement with the committee as he has done. Matt Rice has been appointed to replace Ms Williams.
- 5.26 Mr Donovan then provided a progress update on performance at Northern. He advised the Committee that there had been an improvement in cancellation levels which have fallen to 4.7% but he recognised that there is still room for improvement. He explained that the rest day working agreement that is in place has enabled Northern to improve work on the skills agenda as well as increase the level of route and traction knowledge training across the business by about 30%, which will improve resilience in the future. Additionally, there is a new occupational health provider in place which is providing a more robust contract and better support.
- 5.27 Whilst Mayor Rotheram was encouraged by the direction of travel, he highlighted that over the last 12 months between TPE and Northern 72,000 trains have been cancelled and he questioned if the trajectory for the next 12 months would see a fall in the number of cancellations.
- 5.28 In response Mr Donovan informed the Committee that Northern is in the process of agreeing its performance trajectory for next year and will return to the Committee once this has been agreed. After the Chair sought an approximate projection, Mr Donovan commented that the number will be significantly lower, based on assumptions around training and that the rest day working agreement will continue.
- 5.29 Cllr Hinchcliffe sought reassurance on sickness levels and that Northern is heading in the right direction and that the work being done by the new occupational health company is working. She suggested that the figures on sickness be shared with officers of TfN and Rail North so a judgement can be made on the impact.
- 5.30 Mr Donovan informed the Committee that these figures are regularly shared with the Rail North Partnership highlighting that mental health is the highest cause of sickness and this is a common issue across operators. He stated that Northern has built a positive partnership with Andy's Man Club and staff are benefiting from this work. He explained that the increase in resilience of delivery of the resource plan through route and traction knowledge has given greater resilience against higher sickness levels.
- 5.31 The Head of Strategic Rail also provided reassurance on this. He told the Committee that the recovery plan and sickness is being monitored and together with the Rail and Road Director they meet regularly with Mr Donovan and Ms Williams to review progress. He stated that it is clear that sickness is the biggest driver and has been off target for the last year. Viewing the plans to reduce sickness has highlighted a concern that they are ambitious compared to the target, but the situation will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis.

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- 5.32 The Chair then moved on to Avanti West Coast and before introducing Mr Andy Mellors he expressed his concern at the performance of this operator.
- 5.33 Members received a presentation from Mr Andy Mellors who provided an update from Avanti West Coast.
- 5.34 The Chair commented on the difficulty in reconciling the performance reported by Mr Mellors against the reality of the situation for passengers. He raised a number of issues with Mr Mellors including the February half term and the late information delivered around train cancellations on Saturday 17 February which made it difficult for football supporters to return to London following a football match. He also challenged Mr Mellors on station arrivals within three minutes of schedule, cancellations and PPM. The Chair also expressed his frustration at the Avanti's relationship with the constituent authorities with Avanti failing to work with them and inform them of problems in order that these can be managed together. Currently authorities are being informed too late so that people cannot be informed early enough.
- 5.35 Cllr Gannon expressed his disappointment in Mr Mellors' presentation commenting on the company's inability to accept that there is a problem. He believed that all Avanti has done is offer excuses and blame others for their poor performance. He commented that it is embarrassing that passengers were unable to get a train after 6.55pm on a Saturday evening between two of the biggest cities in the country.
- 5.36 In response Mr Mellors said that the company has been in recovery measures for the past 18 months and believes as part of the recovery they have been transparent about the challenges they have faced. He also highlighted the backlog of driver training the company has and stated that it have been working hard to get drivers through the training pipeline as well as taking steps to improve the availability of productive drivers in the right place at the right time with some roster changes.
- 5.37 Cllr Swarbrick believed that the time has come to sharpen the focus on Avanti and provide additional scrutiny on its performance.
- 5.38 Mayor Rotheram commented that the media article highlighting a slide pack at an Avanti meeting speaking of the availability of free money has been a public relations disaster for Avanti, and that an external investigation into the issue would be more effective than an internal investigation.
- 5.39 On Avanti performance Mayor Rotheram stated that his experience of travelling on Avanti is different to the picture painted by Mr Mellors. He then highlighted the importance of these services and whilst understanding the need for Avanti to make a profit he emphasised the importance of the London service along the West Coast as it connects the whole infrastructure of the UK, connecting people not only with places, but with opportunity. He also highlighted the significant effects poor service levels have on the wider economies.
- 5.40 Mayor Rotheram requested clarity on his understanding that from July there will be two trains an hour from Liverpool as the presentation from

Mr Mellors indicated that this will only be the case if there is availability of fleet with regards to the timetable.

- 5.41 In response Mr Mellors stated that during engagement with Liverpool City Region Avanti had clearly set out the expectation of putting on a second train in each direction as part of the June timetable. He explained that they have the slots in the timetable, but have been very clear that this is conditional on the availability of the rolling stock and getting driver training to a particular position. He added that they are still working to this but the first priority is to introduce the Hitachi trains and then the first electric trains will be used on the Liverpool route once they have been delivered.
- 5.42 The Chair did not believe that the Committee had seen what is required from the company, and what has been said has not given confidence that matters will improve. He suggested that a decision on the next steps be considered at the March Board meeting.
- 5.43 The Chief Executive stated it is clear that the Committee expects more work to be done on this and suggested that officers set out the options to be presented to Board for Members to consider.
- 5.44 On the issue of two trains an hour for the Liverpool City Region the Chief Executive requested more clarity on whether there are any contingent infrastructure requirements on Network Rail to be able to deliver the additional Liverpool services. He understood that there are existing constraints which need to be overcome before that outcome can be delivered.
- 5.45 Lord McLoughlin was concerned that when Avanti was presented with figures by the Chair these were not recognised by them and Avanti and the Committee need to work together in order to reach an agreement on what the accurate figures are.
- 5.46 In summing up what the Committee had discussed and the feelings of the Committee, the Chair stated that together with the West Coast Mainline this is the most important railway line in the country and it shouldn't just be a passable service; it needs to be the best if the best message is to be delivered on "UKPLC".
- 5.47 He further stated that the company needs to start working with Members differently, providing more information in advance when knowing a problem will occur. Regarding the investigation on the slide pack, he commented that it is not good enough to say that the results will not be published due to it being an internal matter. In his view, it is clear that there are issues internally that need to be addressed, and sharing the results of that investigation would be easier than answering questions on why Avanti has not published them.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the information in the report and supports the actions that Rail North Partnership (RNP) is taking to ensure operators focus on delivering the services passengers need
- 2) That officers prepare a report to be considered at the March Transport for the North Board setting out the options it might consider in providing

advice to the Secretary of State regarding the future of Avanti West Coast contract.

6 Infrastructure Focus

- 6.1 Members received the report from the Investment Planning Manager who then highlighted the key points within the report.
- 6.2 Cllr Hinchcliffe requested that in the letter to the DfT about the task force for Leeds in Sheffield, there is an explicit reference to the need that the land from HS2 be safeguarded for a T-shaped station at Leeds.
- 6.3 She also raised the issue of landslips and requested that a study be undertaken on the number of landslips that have occurred in the last year on railway lines and how this compares to 10 years ago and how the industry can deal with it. She believes this issue will affect economies and that steps need to be taken to address it.
- 6.4 The Investment Planning Manager stated that these points can be included into the next steps and that he will liaise with officers with regard to an assessment of the environmental impact and where activity can be proposed.
- 6.5 The Chief Executive highlighted that network resilience is an increasing problem and suggested working with Network Rail with a view to having a more substantive conversation in the future.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the updates provided in relation to each of the programmes in development and delivery across the North.
- 2) That the Committee endorses the proposed activity set out as next steps, supporting the aspiration for improved engagement with the industry and greater involvement by TfN in the development and delivery of schemes within its region, recognising the opportunities for greater integration of changes.

7 Transport for the North Business Plan and Member Contributions 2024/25

- 7.1 Members received the report from the Head of Strategic Rail who then highlighted the key points within the report.
- 7.2 The Chair suggested that the Committee also needs to discuss the emerging draft legislation and whether or not there is the correct level of devolution and local control proposed.
- 7.3 Lord McLoughlin suggested that this should not be held over to the next meeting and needs to be discussed sooner.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee endorses the approach set out in the report to the 2024/25 rail elements of Transport for the North's Business Plan and notes the Department for Transport funding allocation for 2024/25.

- 2) That the Committee approves the approach to the 2024/25 Member Contributions as outlined in this report.
- 3) That the Committee notes the two governance matters relating to the change in composition of two sub-regions and the change in Rail North Partnership Board members.
- 4) That the Committee notes the proposed forward plan for future meetings.

8 Rail Outlook including Initial Rail Reform Proposition (ensuring that the growth and transformation agenda is addressed) and Strategic Rail Report

- 8.1 Members received the report from the Head of Strategic Rail who then highlighted the points within the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the content of the report including the strong growth aspirations set out in the Strategic Transport Plan if rail is to play its full role in supporting the economic, social, and environmental aspirations of the North.
- 2) That the Committee endorses the final version of the Strategic Rail Report noting that there is still an opportunity to provide further input before it is finalised.

9 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 4 June 2024 at 11am.

10 Exclusion of the Press and Public

To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Items 11,12 and 13 on the grounds that:

- (1) It is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during such item(s), confidential information as defined in S100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them in breach of the obligation of confidence; and/or
- (2) it / they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the Paragraphs [listed below] of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

11 Private Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 11.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 were considered for their accuracy.

Resolved:

That the private minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 be noted.
It was noted that Lord McLoughlin attended the meeting as an observer.

12 Train Operator Annual Business Plans for 2024/25

- 12.1 The report was received by Members who were then invited to ask questions and make comments.

Resolved:

That the report be noted

13 Rolling Stock Strategy

- 13.1 The report was received by Members who were then invited to ask questions and make comments.

Resolved:

That the report be noted

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Meeting: Rail North Committee

Subject: Accessibility Task & Finish Group - Update

Author: David Worsley, Rail Strategy Manager

Sponsor: Martin Tugwell, Chief Executive

Meeting Date: Monday, 15 July 2024

1. Purpose of the Report:

1.1 To provide the Committee with the output from the Rail Accessibility Task & Finish Group. It also highlights that additional information regarding passenger experience was gathered through our Accessibility Survey, which closed on 7 June.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended that the Rail North Committee endorses the work of the Task & Finish Group, including the indicative 10-year programme, as shown below:

	Control Period 7					Control Period 8					CP9	
Year	2024-5	2025-6	2026-7	2027-8	2028-9	2029-30	2030-1	2031-2	2032-3	2033-4	2034-5	
Programme	Quick wins					Main programme						
By CP	Up to £387 million over 3 years					£918 million over 6 years						
Stations	157 181 271					115 112 126 127 87 32					Total:	
Enhancements	1,787 2,001 2,706					479 454 483 422 331 141					2024 prices	
Approximate annual spend	£102m £125m £162m					£194m £197m £169m £177m £127m £56m					£1.304 billion	

Note: CP = 5-year Control Period

2.2 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Endorse the key messages from the Accessibility Task and Finish Group as set out in paragraph 3.5.
- b) Agrees the proposals for taking forward work to accelerate the delivery of station accessibility improvements as set out in paragraph 4.5.
- c) Endorse the 'quick wins' programme as set out in paragraph 4.6.

3. Context

- 3.1 The Rail Accessibility Task and Finish Group was set up by the Committee in recognition of the importance of having a rail system accessible to all. It was also in part a reflection of the need for strategic leadership to ensure that investment and activities being undertaken by the various actors in the rail industry are aligned to achieve that outcome.
- 3.2 At the first two meetings of the Task & Finish Group, several issues were raised which have been incorporated into their work and are reflected in outputs, namely:
- The Terms of Reference have been expanded to include inclusivity in a wider sense than merely impairments, as we noted that not all demographic groups feel equally

safe travelling by train. The inclusion of CCTV and lighting improvements in order to enhance passenger security was therefore reaffirmed;

- In order to maximise deliverability of the programme, the group agreed that the works should be split into a programme of “quick wins” (which can be delivered without major disruption and could be commenced during this control period) and a main programme that would involve disruptive possessions and would be deliverable during Control Period 8 (i.e. 2029 to 2034);
- It was noted that the stations facility information that Mott MacDonald used for their business case work was publicly available data from the National Rail website. This was widely thought to be out-of-date, and has been superseded by the data collected by Atkins for DfT during the recent Accessibility Audit Programme. This has been provided to TfN, and it gives more accurate information on current facilities and more detailed information about how each station accommodates passengers with specific requirements, such as those with visual or auditory impairments, those experiencing dementia and autism, wheelchair users, etc.; and
- Northern Trains informed the group that, in recent years, many innovative facilities have become available that can enhance accessibility for passengers with various impairments, including many that use modern information technology (e.g. Bluetooth). Capital investment prices were subsequently provided for this equipment. It should be noted that whilst responsibility for investment in major station infrastructure (such as lifts and platform extensions) remains with Network Rail, the Train Operating Companies (through their contracts) are responsible for items such as signage, handrails, cycling facilities and seating, and in some cases have existing programmes of improvements which will have to be taken into account.

3.3 Further meetings of the Task & Finish Group were held on 8 March and 17 May 2024. In addition, technical working group meetings were held on 22 April and 11 June, which discussed issues relating to the financial, managerial, and commercial aspects of improving accessibility. Substantial progress has been made on updating the business case for a programme of station enhancements across the North, which will underpin Transport for the North’s forthcoming ‘Stations Strategy’. Partner organisations have offered useful guidance on clientship and governance issues, and management of the supply chain.

3.4 The recently completed Rail Station Accessibility Survey received over 2,200 responses. The output from this will be incorporated into the ‘Stations Strategy’, and interim findings indicate that issues such as the steepness of ramps, the provision of seating and toilets, and general feelings of feeling unsafe have featured highly in responses to date. The output from the work will be used to develop the business case further.

3.5 Key messages from the work of the Task and Finish Group are:

- An updated analysis of the status of station facilities has indicated that the estimate of the overall cost for bringing the North’s stations up to a desirable standard (including step-free access at all stations) remains circa £1.3 billion. (To put this figure in context, the combined total buildings budget in Control Period 7 for Network Rail’s Eastern and North West & Central Regions is £756 million.)
- The proposed programme of work required now includes additional enhancements (e.g. Braille maps, high contrast stair nosing, Smart Beacons) which will further improve accessibility for passengers, whilst also including enhanced CCTV or lighting at the majority of stations in order to improve confidence in travel safety for all social groups;

- Our reassessment of the scope of the programme has indicated that a much higher proportion of the overall costs would fall within the “quick wins” category of works, which could be implemented without significant disruption to passengers, and thus may be possible to commence within the current Control Period (i.e. before March 2029). This will allow increased flexibility in devising a programme of work which could realistically be completed within 10 years;
 - Our partners involved in the Accessibility Task & Finish Group have provided updated cost data and suggested additional means of strengthening the business case; and
 - Additional information regarding the passenger experience was gathered through our Accessibility Survey, which closed on 7 June 2024.
- 3.6 The key output from the Task and Finish Group is the indicative programme to ensure that stations are fully accessible.

4 Implementation

- 4.1 The key focus of the Committee is to ensure that the indicative programme is implemented. As has already been noted, several actors in the rail industry – Network Rail, the train operators – already deliver investments that improve station accessibility. The opportunity moving forward is to improve the alignment of the levels of investment already being made in support of the indicative programme to maximise benefit for the passenger, even though there is likely to be a need to make the case for additional funding to complete the programme.
- 4.2 Since 2006, the principal means of improving station accessibility has been the DfT’s “Access for All” programme. During Control Period 6 (2019-2024), a total of £350 million across Great Britain was allocated to “Access for All” (including £20 million for smaller projects as part of the “Mid Tier” programme). In the North, a total of 7 stations benefitted from this main programme during Control Period 6, with a further 7 in implementation (as of January 2024) and 6 still in design stage (and therefore due to be delivered after the Control Period finished). Meanwhile, 8 stations in TfN’s area had benefitted from completed “Mid Tier” works, with 2 still in the design stage.
- 4.3 Only 15 stations across the North had benefitted from completed works in Control Period 6 (i.e. 3 per year). At this rate it would take circa 80 years to address approximately 250 stations in the North without step-free access.
- 4.4 The DfT has announced that the “Access for All” budget for Control Period 7 is also £350 million. Only 50 stations across Britain have been confirmed as being within scope for this funding, including only 10 in the North. Evidence suggests that the “Access for All” programme, as currently managed, is failing to utilise the funding identified at the start of a Control Period. Unallocated funding within a Control Period is not capable of being carried forward, meaning that opportunities to deliver improved access to stations are being lost. There is a good argument to be made that the way the “Access for All” programme is currently managed – as a centrally controlled Network Rail programme – is devolved to avoid such a situation continuing into the new Control Period.
- 4.5 In addition to arguing for reform to the “Access for All” programme, the Task and Finish Group’s work identified a few next steps for accelerating delivery of station accessibility improvements in the North:
- Incorporate the output of the Task and Finish Group into a TfN ‘Stations Strategy’, that can be used to support further development and funding bids;
 - TfN to work with partners across the rail industry and with its constituent authorities to align existing investment and identify possible additional sources of funding for the stations enhancement programme, including:

- Sources controlled by central government (i.e. successors to Transforming Cities Fund, City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, Access for All);
 - Investments made by train operators – including using TfN’s input into the annual business planning process to align such investment; and
 - Other sources such as commercialisation of assets, transit-oriented developments, and train operator annual business plans.
- Inclusion of the output from Rail Station Accessibility Survey into the ‘Stations Strategy’;
 - TfN to continue to work with Great British Railways Transition Team on using the output from DfT’s Accessibility Audit Programme to clarify the current status of stations facilities and user experience across the North;
 - TfN to work with the industry to develop a sequenced programme, including identification of the skills and resources needed to deliver the programme in the planned timescale;
 - TfN will work with constituent members to identify how the investment they make in their communities might accelerate the delivery of the program, given that much of the work will need to be managed as a portfolio of local programs rather than a centralised one.
- 4.6 The “quick wins” sub-programme would cost circa £390 million (at 2024 prices) for the Desirable option, and £320 million for the Acceptable, whilst the main sub-programme would cost circa £920 million for the Desirable option, and £650 million for the Acceptable option. The contents of these programmes are summarised below, indicating all stations at which it has been estimated at least some improvement is needed in each topic area in the Desirable option:

Quick wins		Main programme	
Item	Number of stations	Item	Number of stations
CCTV security (covering the stations)	473	Step-free access to all areas (lifts)	230
CCTV security (covering surrounding areas)	473	Step-free access to all areas (ramps)	178
Platform lighting	79	Better lighting for surrounding public realm	94
Customer information screens (on platforms)	104	Ticket vending machines	83
Customer information screens (in station buildings)	163	“Sunflower rooms” for those with sensory sensitivities	21
Public address systems	211	Covered cycle parking	383
Help points	273	Cycle hubs	37
Enclosed canopy shelters	264	Additional waiting rooms	5
Accessible toilets and baby changing facilities	175	High contrast stair nosing for the visually impaired	549
Braille station maps	549		
Additional hearing induction loops	464		
Smart beacon technology	609		
Additional seating	86		

- 4.7 There are a number of programme risks, of which the main ones to be noted are:
- Addressing station infrastructure does not alleviate any issues relating to rolling stock, which can only be addressed over a longer timescale due to vehicle procurement processes. A comprehensive solution to all accessibility issues will require coordination of infrastructure and vehicles at a national level;
 - There are a considerable number of permissions and bureaucratic processes involved in some aspects of this type of work, especially asset protection procedures;
 - High rates of inflation impact on any agreed budgets (especially regarding staff and raw materials costs);
 - The involvement of multiple organisations as clients could lead to inefficiencies in managing the supply chain, incurring unnecessary costs;
 - There remains a shortage of engineering skills in the railway industry, which could make assembling the resources for completion in 10 years challenging. However, this programme would be less affected by the most acute shortages, such as signalling and electrification engineers;
 - There is a degree of uncertainty around the costs and timescales for installing power supplies for those facilities that require electricity; and
 - The cost estimate includes an uplift for the possibility of having to undertake geotechnical works when installing ramps or lifts in areas where the station is located in a cutting or on an embankment. It has been assumed that there is a 30% risk of each of these at each station, but as the programme is developed, this may alter.
- 4.8 Ways of mitigating risks have been discussed at the Task and Finish Group (including amending industry processes where they are a potential barrier) and will be incorporated in the development and delivery of the programme. It is proposed to establish appropriate governance to oversee the next phases of work with oversight continuing to be provided through the Rail North Committee.

5. Corporate Considerations:

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications for Transport for the North relating to this report. The financial implications of the proposed programme are substantial, and funding will need to be sought as set out in the report.

Resource Implications

- 5.2 There are no direct resourcing implications to Transport for the North as a result of this report. There are significant resource implications for delivery of the programme itself and these will be identified as part of the next stage of work.

Legal Implications

- 5.3 The legal implications are contained within the body of this report. The previous committee paper on this topic recommended that when significant collaboration between partners begins in relation to this workstream, a Memorandum of Understanding will be required.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 5.4 Transport for the North is currently managing one corporate risk which relates to this report. [Risk 309: Changed travel patterns and behaviours could impact on train services and investment decisions and which therefore will need to reflect new markets, emerging evidence of demand and requirements of the STP.]

Environmental Implications

5.5 This report does not constitute or influence a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive and therefore does not stimulate the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or EIA. Addressing accessibility of public transport is a fundamental building block of inclusive transport decarbonisation, the focus for Transport for the North within its revised STP and forthcoming Decarbonisation Strategy (expected during 2024/25).

Equality and Diversity

5.6 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this workstream, and this will be updated to take account of the recommendations at a future meeting. The assessment identified a risk that the enhancements considered may not be comprehensive enough to fully address accessibility issues. This has been mitigated by including relevant experts in the Task & Finish Group, who have broadened the scope of the programme.

Consultations

5.7 Transport for the North's partners were consulted as part of the research for the 'Northern England Station Enhancements Programme' in 2022, which underpins the strategic and economic case for this work.

6. Background Papers:

6.1 There are no background papers for this report.

7. Appendices:

7.1 There are no appendices for this report.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used

a) DfT	Department for Transport
b) TfN	Transport for the North
c) STP	Strategic Transport Plan
d) CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
e) SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
f) EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment

Meeting: Rail North Committee
Subject: Rail North Partnership Operational Update
Author: Gary Bogan, Rail North Partnership Director &
David Hoggarth, Head of Strategic Rail
Sponsor: Martin Tugwell, Chief Executive
Meeting Date: Monday, 15 July 2024

1. Purpose of the Report:

1.1 To update the Committee on operational rail matters, including performance, and to ask members to note the information in the report. There will be update presentations from London Northern Eastern Railway (LNER), Avanti West Coast (Avanti), Northern and TransPennine Trains (TPT) at the meeting. The report also includes a recommended response to an industry consultation on recent Open Access applications.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) notes the information in the report and supports the actions that Rail North Partnership (RNP) is taking to ensure operators focus on delivering the services passengers need.
- b) Notes the updates from train operators and invites LNER to provide a business update and take questions from the Committee.
- c) Agrees to resubmit its advice to the Secretary of State in respect of the future of the West Coast operator.
- d) Agrees, subject to amendments made by the Committee, the response to the Open Access applications (Appendix 7)

3. Overview:

- 3.1 Operational performance remains mixed - TPT has significantly reduced cancellation levels and is on track with the recovery plan facilitating restoration of service frequencies at the December 2024 timetable change. Northern is still suffering higher levels of cancellations with particular challenges in the North West and on Sundays. RNP is having further discussions with Northern as to alternative approaches to addressing these issues and developing robust mitigation plans.
- 3.2 Performance continues to be impacted by industry-wide issues including industrial relations (including ongoing and potential future strikes) and higher than average levels of sickness. ASLEF took national action from 6 to 11 May, which included a ban on overtime/rest day working (RDW), leading to staff shortages and thus cancellations. ASLEF also held strikes on Northern and TPT on 9 May, when neither operator ran services. Operators continue to focus on reducing the training backlog, however progress in this regard is affected by industrial action.
- 3.3 RNP is working with TPT and Northern to enable the operators to take appropriate actions for their respective businesses and to ensure there are operational performance recovery plans to meet their contractual targets.

3.4 Updates for other operators serving the North (not covered by the Rail North Partnership Agreement) are included in Appendices 1-6. As part of a rolling programme of engagement with the Committee, LNER will present a business update at this meeting.

4. **Avanti West Coast Performance Update**

4.1 The Committee has highlighted the concern of partners from across the North that the level of service provided by Avanti has been unacceptable for too long. The Managing Director of Avanti attended meetings on 14 November 2023 and 21 February 2024. In March 2024, Avanti attended the TfN Board and following a robust discussion, the Board agreed to write to the Secretary of State advising that Avanti's contract should be terminated, and the operation transferred to the Government's Operator of Last Resort. DfT responded on 7 June to say that due to the calling of the election a substantive response was not possible and inviting TfN to re-submit its letter after 4 July.

4.2 The TfN Board on 21 March 2024 heard that Avanti's median PPM score between 6 January and 24 February 2024 was 68.6%. As the update in Appendix 1 indicates, Avanti's average PPM score for the 12 weeks from 1 April 2024 was 66.5% with one period reaching 69.1%. Whilst this does not indicate any improvement on the previous position, Avanti has highlighted a reduction in the proportion of cancellations caused by the operator on itself by 45% with Network Rail responsible for 64% of delays reflecting an increase in infrastructure failures. Avanti will be present at the meeting to provide a further update and take questions.

4.3 Given the continuing under performance of operations on the West Coast Main Line there is no reason why the Committee should change its position. Accordingly, it is recommended the letter to the Secretary of State is re-submitted. However, in so doing it is also recommended that reference is made to the increased level of infrastructure failures on the West Coast Main Line and the need for urgent action on the route infrastructure alongside the need to resolve issues with Avanti itself.

5. **Open Access Applications**

5.1 Recently, several proposals for new services (and specifically the track access rights needed) have emerged, in part prompted by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) inviting companies to make submissions. Earlier in the year Grand Union was granted access rights to run a small number of services from Stirling to Euston via the West Coast Main Line. Hull Trains has put forward proposals for a new Sheffield to London via Retford on the East Coast Main Line. In addition, London North Western Railway (a contracted rather than 'open access' operator) is proposing extending London-Crewe services to Manchester Victoria and extending services from Stoke-on-Trent to Manchester Airport.

There are two live applications particularly relevant to the North where TfN proposes to respond to an industry consultation:

- Lumo – Rochdale to London Euston services
- Virgin Trains – four new service groups between London Euston and points further north including
 - Preston/Rochdale via Manchester Piccadilly and through Central Manchester
 - Liverpool Lime Street via Runcorn
 - Glasgow Central via Golborne, Preston, and Carlisle.

5.2 It is recognised that open access services can be beneficial to the overall rail market by driving growth through competition and being able to provide direct services to new destinations. Observation of Hull Trains, Grand Central (serving

Bradford and Sunderland) and Lumo on the ECML suggest that Open Access services do have the ability to grow the market and improve the customer offer.

5.3 However, as this Committee is all too aware, performance on the West Coast Main Line is extremely challenging and lacks operational resilience. Whilst on the East Coast Main Line, the need to postpone the proposed timetable change reflects the fact that demand for paths bid for through the industry processes outstrips available capacity. It should be noted that notwithstanding the significant investment in infrastructure committed to as part of the new Control Period, it is widely accepted across the industry that this is insufficient to maintain standards.

5.4 As things stand, there is not enough clarity that the additional direct services to London under consideration can be accommodated without detrimental impact on performance and/or realisation of the benefits of existing investment programmes. In addition, it should be noted that the use of capacity on the network to support additional services to/from London makes it harder to improve pan-regional services as envisaged in the Strategic Transport Plan. A significant contributory factor here is that the objectives used by the ORR to consider access requests are not necessarily aligned with the evidence-based outcomes set out in the Strategic Transport Plan.

5.5 The draft response recommends that applications are put on hold until other issues are resolved. This conclusion is based on a number of factors including:

- The North suffers from continued issues of poorer rail performance in relation to other parts of the country, driven in part by significant bottlenecks and congested infrastructure (including Central Manchester, the West Coast Main Line more generally, Leeds Station (the 3rd biggest sources of delays on the entire UK network) and the East Coast Main Line);
- There are specific Task Forces leading work to tackle congestion and develop future timetables in Central Manchester and on the East Coast Main Line. They must be allowed to complete their advice and establish a baseline for future services before further Open Access is considered;
- In the case of services across Manchester, TfN has reluctantly accepted a short-term reduction in services ahead of additional infrastructure being delivered and the priority must be the restoration of lost services ahead of new services;
- The government is investing £11.5bn in the TransPennine Route Upgrade scheme as an enabler for more significant investment in Northern Powerhouse Rail. A concept timetable is under development that seeks to maximise the benefits of this investment and it's important that this work is completed to determine what, if any, further paths are available;
- There are examples where incumbent operators do not have firm track access rights for services that are established and form part of the baseline for future service enhancements. It is important that these issues are resolved ahead of the consideration of further Open Access.

5.6 A draft response to the Lumo and Virgin Trains applications is set out in Appendix 7, which would also be used as the basis for any further consultations relating to similar congested parts of the network.

6. TransPennine Trains

6.1 TPT remains on track to deliver its recovery plan as outlined at previous meetings, including reinstating some previously withdrawn services in June, with all services restored by December 2024. TPT's work to eliminate its driver-training backlog means that it is on track to achieve 100% competence for the driver establishment needed to run the December 2024 timetable. This will mean

driver training will only be required to maintain route and traction knowledge, for new drivers, or for TRU diversions.

- 6.2 On 2 June 2024, the summer timetable for the railway was introduced. TPT introduced a number of services uplifts, increasing frequency and connectivity on parts of the network:

West Coast Main Line:

- Uplifting from 34 to 40 trains per day – a return to the full timetable as run before TPT’s agreed step-down in December 2023 – providing connectivity improvements for Manchester, Liverpool, Lancashire, Cumbria, and Scotland.

South TransPennine route:

- Additional service between Cleethorpes – Doncaster on Saturday evenings.

North TransPennine route:

- Additional evening services between Liverpool – Manchester/Manchester Airport,
- Additional weekend services (operating June – October) between York – Scarborough.

- 6.3 The December 2024 timetable is going through the standard industry readiness process and will see restoration of all TPT North TransPennine route services that were stepped back at the December 2023 timetable change. This will see 4 express services per hour Manchester–Leeds and the reinstatement of the express Hull–Liverpool service. This timetable will also see departures from Leeds for Manchester Victoria and from Manchester Victoria to Leeds run to a 15-minute clockface timetable. Manchester Piccadilly will also have 1 train per hour to Huddersfield with at least every other service extended to York via Wakefield, plus a peak-time-only train to Huddersfield calling all stations.

The implications of the East Coast Main Line timetable challenges, for TPT and other operators, will be dealt with in detail as a separate agenda item.

- 6.4 A jointly funded project between TPT and Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) has seen works take place over the spring to install a Changing Places facility at Stalybridge station. TPT and MDUK are evaluating other stations where they could partner to install Changing Places facilities, with a feasibility study already underway at Cleethorpes station.

New accessible seating has been installed at Hull Paragon Interchange. The new seats are designed to meet multiple accessibility requirements, including different heights to make them easier to stand from, better back support, and some seats without armrests to facilitate transfers from a wheelchair.

- 6.5 TPT have been working with TfN members to evaluate options for additional or strengthened services to support key events. This has included an additional service between Manchester and Liverpool to support an Olivia Rodrigo concert at the Co-op Live arena - while the concert was cancelled, the train still ran. Service strengthening of the last service of the day through Middlesbrough has also been arranged to support travel following a Take That concert.

- 6.6 TPT has continued its programme of ambience improvements at Hull Paragon Interchange with the installation of a dozen evergreen trees throughout the concourse. The installation has been warmly welcomed by customers and Hull City Council and follows other improvements such as the mural painted on the walls at the entrance to the Interchange.

- 6.7 TPT has opened its application process for its apprenticeship scheme for this year. Eight apprenticeship positions are available in areas including customer experience, performance, service planning, safety, retailing and resourcing.

Applications closed on 31 May. Interviews with shortlisted applicants will be held over the summer, with the appointed apprentices starting with TPT in September.

TPT has also joined forces with LNER, Northern and Southeastern for Future Labs – a scheme designed to accelerate ideas that address common and emerging issues for the sector. Successful applicants will gain access to industry data and resources as well as mentors and subject matter experts working for the train operators to bring their products and services to life.

- 6.8 TPT’s trial of a new catering offer for customers on the West Coast Main Line, which sources produce from suppliers along the route, has been well received by customers. The West Coast Kitchen features two customer hosts on board each service, with one dedicated to First Class. Passengers in First Class receive an enhanced service, including hot meals, snacks, and alcohol. In Standard Class, customers have three trolley services throughout the full journey, providing more opportunities to order food and drink. An additional 30 jobs have been created throughout the route as a result of this service development. Menus, which offer a range of meals, will rotate frequently, providing variety for frequent travellers.

7. Northern

- 7.1 Northern continues with its action plan to reduce cancellation rates due to train crew unavailability, driven by root causes of sickness absence, skills, and Sundays. When the ASLEF RDW agreement has been in place, and in the absence of industrial action, Northern has been able to expedite progress through their driver training workbank (skills).

However, cancellation rates continue to be a concern, and are particularly acute in the North-West and on Sundays, which remain outside of the working week for drivers in that region and for conductors across Northern. While not a decision taken lightly, Northern continues to pre-cancel services (p-coding) in the North-West to give customers as much notice as possible for travel planning, when traincrew availability is challenging. RNP will continue to monitor progress closely. Services have also been impacted by weather related infrastructure issues including landslips, leading to temporary line closures (e.g., Baildon and Pontefract) and in one case leading to a derailment in Cumbria.

- 7.2 Preparations for the June 24 timetable change were robust, including some excellent collaboration with the Trades Unions. The initial bedding in of the new timetable has been successful. It includes provision for the introduction of the Northumberland Line and the cascade of Class 323 trains from West Midlands Trains to reinstate previously lost capacity. It also introduced a new Saturday service between Manchester and Ribbleshead ‘Yorkshire Dales Explorer’. Following the deferral of ECML timetable structure changes, Northern is working on a June timetable rollover for the December 24 timetable with the addition of the planned partial remapping of Leeds – Huddersfield local services. Work is underway to develop plans for 2025 service changes.
- 7.3 Tricia Williams succeeded Nick Donovan as Managing Director on 6 May 2024. Matt Rice has also joined Northern as Chief Operating Officer. Tricia will be attending the committee and will give an update on Northern’s performance.
- 7.4 Underlying demand growth has been stable at around 3%; constrained in late 2023-24 by strikes, a challenging economic backdrop and weak weather conditions. Moving into 2024-25, the economic landscape is performing slightly ahead of expectations and Period 2 delivered the first period of strong weather conditions, which collectively supported stronger leisure growth. In contrast, although improving in late 2023-24, service delivery was challenging in Period 2 suppressing demand growth.

Looking ahead, the potential for improved weather as we move into summer should combine with commercial levers such as marketing, advance purchase,

and revenue protection to drive growth, but strikes and wider service delivery challenges remain as headwinds.

- 7.5 To meet the Department for Transport's aspirations for accelerated decarbonisation, Northern restarted the procurement process for its new train fleet with a revised specification, which includes the option of battery powered trains in the future. The revised contract notice was issued in May and outlines three different types of stock, the quantities, phasing, and timescales involved and details of the fleet it will replace. It is anticipated that the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) will be issued to market later this year.
- 7.6 Northern's apprenticeship offering received an overall 'good' rating in its first OFSTED inspection earlier this year. A significant result with only 5% of new providers achieving this on first inspection. The quality of education provided, and the behaviour, attitudes, and apprenticeships were rated as Outstanding. It was noted that very high expectations for work behaviors and attitudes are set for apprentices and in turn, they are committed to the training while demonstrating very high standards of professional behaviors.
- 7.7 On 8 June Northern launched its year-round Yorkshire Dales Explorer service, running 2 trains every Saturday Manchester-Ribblehead. The service connects Rochdale, Manchester, Bolton and Blackburn with Hellifield on the Bentham line and Ribbleshead on the Settle & Carlisle line. It offers opportunities for walkers and cyclists to visit the Dales from Greater Manchester. Despite limited publicity due to the general election, around 150 passengers joined the first northbound service, with around 120 on the return journey. The next Saturday around 100 joined the first service and 80 the second return service. RNP is working with Yorkshire Dales National Park and York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority and Lancashire Council to promote local activities and local accommodation, food, and drink.

8. TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU)

- 8.1 Members of the Committee and TfN Board received a briefing on progress with TRU from the programme executive team. TRU is in a period of sustained disruptive construction works. In April and May this was focussed around the Morley area, to complete track and signalling upgrades between Dewsbury and Leeds. This is followed by weekend disruption between Slaithwaite and Deighton until 10 June, then a further 4 consecutive 5-day midweek blockades at Morley (24 June-20 July). In September, Castleton Bridge will be blocked for 18 days (6-24 Sept) requiring all Calder Valley services to run via the Diggle route.
- 8.2 TPT is progressing well through the various DfT governance stages in preparation of issuing their Invitation to Negotiate documentation to market for the rolling stock.

9. Corporate Considerations:

Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications to Transport for the North arising from this report.

Resource Implications

- 9.2 There are no direct resourcing implications to Transport for the North arising from this report.

Legal Implications

- 9.3 Any legal implications are contained within this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 9.4 Transport for the North have two relevant corporate risks which are being actively managed - 309 'viability of future train services and future investment decisions' and 311 'future timetables.'

Environmental Implications

- 9.5 This report does not constitute or influence a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the EIA Directive and therefore does not stimulate the need for SEA or EIA. Passenger rail has an essential part to play in achieving our decarbonisation objectives within Transport for the North's Decarbonisation Strategy, particularly around managing private car vehicle mileage.

Equality and Diversity

- 9.6 There are no equality or diversity issues arising from the report.

10. Appendices:

- 10.1 Appendices 1 – 6: Operator Updates
10.2 Appendices 7: Draft Open Access Consultation response

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used:

ASLEF	The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ASOS	Action Short of Strike
DOHL	Department for Transport OLR Holdings Ltd
ECML	East Coast Mainline
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ITN	Invitation to Negotiate
MDUK	Muscular Dystrophy UK
NTL	Northern Trains Ltd or ("Northern")
OFSTED	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ORR	Office of Rail and Road
PPM	Public Performance Measure
RDW	Rest Day Working
RNP	Rail North Partnership
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
TfW	Transport for Wales Rail-Trafnidiaeth Cymru
TPT	TransPennine Trains Ltd or ("TransPennine Express")
TRU	TransPennine Route Upgrade

Appendix 1: Avanti West Coast (AWC) Update

- A1.1 In line with its plan, and as mentioned at previous meetings, AWC has taken steps to improve the availability of traincrew, working proactively with unions to improve rosters and the use of rest day working to more effectively allocate train driver resources in line with customer need as well as progress training on new trains.
- A1.2 There has been a reduction in AWC responsible cancellations in the last 12 weeks by 45% compared to the preceding 12 weeks. AWC has managed the initial introduction of its Evero fleet successfully and is increasing the number of its productive drivers thanks to its continuing driver recruitment and training. We do still have resilience issues during peak holiday periods which is the same as other operators.
- A1.3 In the 12 weeks from April 1, 2024, AWC was responsible for 22% of the delays to its services, with Network Rail responsible for 64% and other operators responsible for 14%. Overall PPM – the measure of what percentage of trains arrived at destination within 10 minutes of schedule, irrespective of the causation of delays and cancellations – was at 69.1%, 68.2% and 62.2% in each of the

four-week periods following April 1. The annual average PPM for the 12 months up to June 22 was 67.5%

- A1.4 Over the last few months, there has been several significant infrastructure challenges impacting reliability and punctuality. AWC has focussed on giving customers timely and helpful information and working with Network Rail to recover services as quickly as possible. AWC is part of new industry collaborations that create innovative solutions to persistent problems, for example this has improved 'right time starts' by 8% from Manchester Piccadilly.
- A1.5 In the near future, AWC plans to start the roll out of its new £350m Hitachi trains. These bi-mode and electric trains will reduce carbon emissions by over two-thirds in comparison with the diesel Voyager fleet that they are replacing. Serving the Midlands, Chester, and North Wales routes, they will provide more seats, improved comfort, and a range of improved accessibility features. The introduction of the new fleet requires 2,500 training days and takes drivers away from passenger services for around two weeks at a time. AWC is recruiting around 70 trainee or qualified drivers for each of the next few years.
- A1.6 AWC continues to introduce new products to cater for evolving travel patterns and demand, including the extension of its Superfare ticket. From the end of April, customers travelling from the Lake District are able to take advantage of new tickets from London to Oxenholme (£26), Penrith (£26) and Carlisle (£28). Passengers travelling between Milton Keynes and Manchester (£18) and Preston and Glasgow (£12) now also have the choice of a Superfare ticket.

Appendix 2: CrossCountry (XC) Update

- A2.1 Performance in terms of cancellations and punctuality has stabilised, and XC has initiatives in place to drive further improvement, working closely with Network Rail.
- A2.2 XC is also looking to improve customer experience through deploying additional Voyager units to strengthen trains over the summer period from June, along with targeted changes to calls at locations such as Wakefield and Chesterfield.
- A2.3 This precedes introduction of its additional Newcastle-Reading services, planned from May 2025 – XC is working through the impact of the East Coast timetable change deferral on this planned service, but given the pressures on the ECML and the difficulties of accommodating existing demand, an additional service looks unlikely.
- A2.4 Longer term, XC is looking forward to its upcoming fleet refurbishment – this is expected to start in Q4 2024/5.
- A2.5 Underlying XC's plans is significant risk around the challenging Industrial Relations climate, including ongoing discussions over pay and its upcoming Rest Day Working agreement renewal.

Appendix 3: East Midlands Railway (EMR) Update

- A3.1 EMR have announced the start of a £60m programme to refurbish its fleet of Class 360, Class 158, and Class 170 trains. Together with the introduction of the new Aurora Intercity trains, this will mean that all EMR's trains will either be replaced with new trains or refurbished.
- A3.2 Relevant to the region is EMR's Class 158 fleet, which will receive new seat covers and foams, an interior refresh and CCTV. Also operating in the North is EMR's Class 170 fleet, which has come to EMR from different operators and will be upgraded to provide a consistent customer experience across the fleet. All trains

will receive new seat foams and covers, an extensive refresh as well as new passenger information systems and CCTV.

- A3.3 EMR's performance in March and April was strong, with 78.8% T-3 performance (the percentage of trains arriving within three minutes of their schedule at each calling point) and 97.7% T-15 performance (as before, within 15 minutes). EMR had a network cancellation rate of 2.3% and a short formation rate of 1.16%.
- A3.4 From the June 2024 timetable change, EMR will be running longer trains on some of their trains on Saturdays and Sundays on the Liverpool–Nottingham–Norwich route.

Appendix 4: Lumo Update

- A4.1 While punctuality figures for March and April were slightly below target, Lumo's cancellations were far lower than expected. Recent performance on Lumo was driven by a series of external infrastructure issues with overhead lines and points, that meant that parts of the East Coast Main Line were closed temporarily due to damage. There were also a number of other operator train failures causing delays, as well as external animal incursion and a fatality during this period.
- A4.2 Lumo's passenger numbers remain strong, and it has recently announced an overall satisfaction rating of 96% by its customers. This comes along with the news that there has been a 18% reduction in complaints year on year despite 11% growth of overall passenger numbers. The complaints handling improvement has also been reflected by a 60% reduction in escalated complaints to the Rail Ombudsman compared to last year.
- A4.3 In recent weeks the company announced interest in running some of its services through to Glasgow. Full details of this is to be confirmed, such as route, paths, and timings. Lumo is working with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to assess the feasibility of operation.
- A4.4 FirstGroup has submitted the first phase of an application for a new open access rail service between Rochdale and London under the Lumo brand. The proposed service would run 6 return trains between London Euston and Rochdale via Manchester calling at Warrington Bank Quay, Newton le Willows, Eccles, and Manchester Victoria. If the proposal is approved, it would restore Rochdale's direct link to London for the first time since 2000. All of the trains on this new route would be electric and battery powered, and the service would be operated by brand new trains built in the UK.

The station at Eccles provides connectivity for other parts of Salford, including MediaCity via the nearby interchange with Metrolink, and services to Newton-le-Willows will deliver greater rail connectivity for St Helens. Lumo estimates that this new service would provide 1.6m people in the North West with "a convenient and competitively priced direct rail service to London from stations that are more local to them, helping to stimulate a shift in transport mode from coach and car travel to rail."

The application has been submitted to the regulator, ORR, and will now go through a period of consultation. If approved the service could commence from 2027.

Appendix 5: Hull Trains Update

- A5.1 At the end of the last year, Hull Trains achieved internal delay and cancellation targets, although Network Rail failed delay minute targets. The start of this year has seen a positive start with all targets being achieved by both Hull Trains and

Network Rail and several days of 100% PPM running last period. Key causes of delay remain external factors to Hull Trains such as infrastructure faults, trespass, and faults on other operators' trains. Hull Trains' efforts to reduce delays were recognised as it won the industry Golden Whistle award for 'Minimising Delay Minutes', along with sister company Lumo.

- A5.2 The company's application to the Office of Rail and Road for a new open access rail service between Sheffield and London is now awaiting a decision from the regulator.
- A5.3 Recent customer satisfaction results for the operator revealed a 96% Overall Customer Satisfaction level, which under the former National Rail Passenger Survey would have been an industry-leading score. Full-year complaints figures were also down 24% year-on-year, and the company dealt with these 60% faster than the previous year, all testament to the hard work and continued customer focus of their team.

Appendix 6: LNER Update

- A6.1 Performance has remained consistent in Periods 1 and 2. LNER punctuality at all stations was around 60%. Time to 3 was 76%, Time to 15 slightly decreased from 95%, in Period 1, to 93% in Period 2.
- A6.2 In June 2024 LNER made changes to its West Yorkshire Sunday timetable. LNER introduced two West Yorkshire services and strengthened two services in June 2024, seeing a further 1,500 seats added on Sundays. The timetable uplift on Sunday makes LNER's Anglo-Scot services less crowded – and therefore improves the customer travel experience for customers across its route.
- A6.3 The transformational timetable planned for December 2024 has been deferred to either May or December 2025. LNER is committed to its introduction, delivering faster and more frequent services on the East Coast Main Line. Delivering the transformational timetable will deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits as well as generating industry revenue (circa. £60m) that can support further enhancements that will benefit rail users and communities in the north. LNER will continue to work with industry partners to ensure that the transformational timetable is delivered.
- A6.4 In December, LNER will withdraw early-morning and late-night extensions to Glasgow, Stirling, and Sunderland due to low customer numbers. LNER will introduce an interim 2 hourly York and Newcastle shuttle service Monday-Friday. The service has been introduced to ensure that the North East and North Yorkshire retain good connectivity until the transformational timetable is introduced in either May or December 2025.
- A6.5 Assistance was requested on and off trains at LNER's managed stations more than 250,000 times over the past year – the highest number to date. LNER is committed to providing passenger assistance to anyone who requires it, whether they book the service in advance or upon arrival at one of its eleven managed stations, or at London King's Cross and Edinburgh Waverley stations. Between April 2023 and the end of March 2024, LNER received over 252,000 requests with teams across the route assisting many thousands of customers during their journeys.
- A6.6 Every LNER managed station is now safer thanks to the installation of tactile surfacing at platform edges. More than 600,000 studs have been installed across platforms over the past 2 years and work has just been completed on the project introducing and enhancing the surfacing across 11 stations managed by LNER.

- A6.7 LNER's latest accessibility innovation, a full integration of British Sign Language (BSL) across its customer information screens, entered a trial period last December, with the aim of providing parity of information for deaf customers who use BSL. Following a successful trial, this is now being implemented across most of LNER's managed stations.
- A6.8 LNER customers are now able to find the latest journey updates, destination inspiration and more while they are travelling onboard, with the launch of a new one-stop digital information service. By scanning a QR code on the seat, customers can self-serve and have access to a variety of information. This includes the latest on their journey and connecting services, the wider rail network, facilities at their destination station, and ideas on attractions and places they could visit when they get there.
- A6.9 LNER has joined forces with 3 other train operators on a Dragons' Den-style scheme to support innovation in the rail industry. LNER, Northern, Southeastern and TPT are looking for cutting-edge technology startups to apply to Future Labs – a scheme designed to accelerate ideas that address common and emerging issues for the sector. Successful applicants will gain access to industry data and resources as well as mentors and subject matter experts working for the train operators to bring their products and services to life. They will be able to apply, test and demonstrate their ideas in real-world environments over a 12-week period.

Appendix 7.

Draft Open Access Consultation Response

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Date: ## July 2024

Gianmaria Cutrupi

Aspirant Open Access Operators
Manager, Network Rail
Waterloo General Office
London
SE1 8SW

By Email

David Hoggarth

Transport for the North
Level 6
Town Hall Extension
Lloyd Street
Manchester
M2 5DB

Dear Gianmaria,

Track Access Consultations – Virgin and Lumo Open Access Services

I write on behalf of Transport for the North (TfN) with specific reference to Section 17 Track Access applications submitted in May 2024 by Virgin and East Coast Trains Limited, and Open Access application in general.

TfN is the Secretary of State's statutory partner in advising on strategic investment priorities for the North. It is also jointly responsible with the DfT, through the Rail North Agreement, with the specification and oversight of the Northern and TransPennine Trains (TPT) contracts.

Our Strategic Transport Plan¹ sets out the vision that by 2050 the North of England will have become a thriving, socially inclusive region. Our communities, businesses and places will all benefit from sustainable economic growth, improved health and wellbeing and access to opportunities for all. This will be achieved through a transformed, near zero-emission, integrated, safe, affordable, and sustainable transport system, which will enhance connectivity, support mode shift and resilience and improve journey times for all users.

The Strategic Transport Plan is under-pinned by a comprehensive evidence base and was handed over to the Secretary of State as statutory advice in March 2024. It provides the overarching policy framework for the development of the North's rail system in the period to 2050.

We understand that Virgin is applying for four new open access services between London Euston and:

- Preston/Rochdale (14 daily services Monday - Sunday), via Nuneaton, Stoke-on-Trent, Stockport, and Manchester Piccadilly, and then via:
 - Bolton, Horwich Parkway, Chorley to Preston
 - Manchester Victoria to Rochdale.
- Liverpool Lime Street (30 daily services Monday to Sunday) via Tamworth, Lichfield Trent Valley, Runcorn, and Liverpool South Parkway;

¹ [Strategic Transport Plan - Transforming the North | Transport for the North, 2024 - Transport for the North - Transport for the North](#)

- Birmingham New Street (16 daily services Monday to Sunday) via Coventry and Birmingham International; and,
- Glasgow Central (8 daily services Monday to Sunday), via a future station at Golborne, Preston, Carlisle, Motherwell, and Lockerbie.

The application from Virgin is to operate from December 2025 to 2035.

We understand East Coast Trains Limited (North West Services) is applying for six return journeys a day between Rochdale and London via Manchester Victoria, Eccles, Newton-le-Willows, and Warrington Bank Quay, to operate from 2027 to 2037.

Overview of our Response

TfN recognises that there has been industry research that demonstrates that, in general, open access services have been beneficial to the overall rail market through driving growth through competition and being able to develop direct services to new destinations. Observation of Hull Trains, Grand Central and Lumo on the East Coast Mainline (ECML) suggest that Open Access services do have the ability to grow the market and improve the customer offer.

However, performance on the West Coast Main Line has been extremely challenging and lacked operational resilience for an extended period, and it is noticeable that infrastructure failures on the southern end of the West Coast Main Line are increasingly frequent leading to unacceptable levels of service for both passenger and freight operators. Whilst on the East Coast Main Line, the need to postpone the proposed December 2024 timetable change reflects the fact that demand for paths bid for through the industry processes outstrips available capacity. As things stand there is not enough clarity that the additional direct services to London under consideration can be accommodated without detrimental impact on performance and/or realisation of benefits of existing programmes of investment. In addition, the use of capacity on the network to support additional services to/from London makes it harder to improve pan-regional services in the way set out in the Strategic Transport Plan.

Given this strategic context TfN recommends that the applications are put on hold until issues detailed below are resolved.

Our view is based on a number of factors including:

- The North suffers from continued issues of poorer rail performance in relation to other parts of the country, driven in part by significant bottlenecks and congested infrastructure (including Central Manchester, the West Coast Main Line more generally, Leeds Station, and the East Coast Main Line).
- There are specific Task Forces leading work to tackle congestion and develop future timetables in Central Manchester and East Coast Main Line. They must be allowed to complete their advice and establish a baseline for future services before further Open Access is considered.
- In the case of services across Manchester, TfN has reluctantly accepted a short-term reduction in services ahead of additional infrastructure being delivered and the priority must be the restoration of lost services ahead of new open access services.
- The government is investing £11.5bn in the TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) scheme as an enabler for more significant investment in Northern

Powerhouse Rail. A concept timetable is under development that seeks to maximise the benefits of this investment and it's important that this work is completed to determine what, if any, further paths are available.

- There are examples where incumbent operators do not have firm track access rights for services that are established and form part of the baseline for future service enhancements. It is important that these issues are resolved ahead of the consideration of further Open Access.

These applications serve to highlight shortfalls in the process for allocating track capacity and planning timetables – an example of which would be the recent postponement of a new timetable for the East Coast Main Line which has been many years in the preparation. A significant contributory factor in this regard is that the objectives used by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to consider access requests are not necessarily aligned with the evidence-based outcomes set out in the Strategic Transport Plan. TfN recommends that reform of this process is essential as part of the overall rail reform programme.

For both applications we would ask for further detailed timetabling and performance modelling to be undertaken to ensure that the proposed service will work alongside the intended end-state service levels for both TRU and Manchester Task Force, for both passenger and freight services, before any further consideration is given.

TfN is happy to discuss in more detail the concerns set out in this letter as part of Network Rail's consideration of the applications. In addition, we have provided a copy of this letter to the Office of Rail and Road.

Yours sincerely

David Hoggarth
Head of Strategic Rail
Transport for the North

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Meeting:	Rail North Committee
Subject:	Train Operating Companies Annual Business Plans 2025/26
Author:	Caroline Young, Partnership and Programme Manager
Sponsor:	Martin Tugwell, Chief Executive Officer
Meeting Date:	Monday 15 July 2024

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To provide an update and overview of the process for shaping the Northern and TransPennine Trains (TPT) business plans for the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.2 To approve Transport for the North (TfN)'s strategic priorities for input into the Annual Business Plan process for the train operator 2025/26 business plans.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 That the Committee considers and approves, subject to any amendment agreed by the meeting, the strategic priorities in paragraph 3.13 as TfN's input into the train operator business plans for 2025/26.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers recommending to the Secretary of State that operators should be required to set their annual business plans in the context of their 5-year strategic plans and in the context of the 10-year service specification that it is under development.

3. Main Issues:**Background**

- 3.1 All contracted train operators, whether operated by the private sector or public sector, are subject to annual business planning. Operators are asked to set out their proposals against a budget provided by the Department for Transport (DfT) as funder of services. These arrangements cover Northern and TPT but do not apply to locally specified services such as Merseyrail and Tyne and Wear Metro.
- 3.2 As a party to the Rail North Partnership (RNP), Transport for the North is in a unique position to help shape the business plans for Northern and TPT by providing input at each main stage of the process. In previous years, this has been done through a combination of this Committee's Member Working Group and through lead officers, working closely with RNP.
- 3.3 It is recognised that the Annual Business Planning process can limit the depth of contributions that partners and stakeholders can make in terms of shaping the plan outcomes. As a result, the annual plans are often iterations of the previous year's plan and opportunities to plan for and develop the service offer over time more limited.
- 3.4 At the Committee meeting on 21 February 2024, the Committee approved the RNP proposal to work on a 10-year re-specification of the baseline for both operators as a way of enabling a discussion on longer-term service development and investment. Whilst this will sit outside the Annual Business Plan process, it does provide the opportunity to agree a direction of travel within which to develop

services. Work on this re-specification has commenced. The two-year programme of work includes information gathering and specification development over summer and Autumn/Winter 2024. This will be followed in Spring 2025 with analytical assurance of the specification proposal and business case, and in Summer 2025 seek approval to proceed. It is currently anticipated that implementation of specification will be for the 2027/28 annual business planning cycle.

2025/26 Priorities

- 3.5 The train operator budgets (set by DfT) for 2025/26 are expected to remain challenging and operators will have to continue to focus on the “must haves”. However, the operator’s annual business plans do allow for inclusion of a 5-year medium term plan, so they have an opportunity to set out direction of travel and a pipeline of priorities. TfN should press that it is a requirement of operators that they should set out the annual business plans in the context of their 5-year plans. In addition to showing how the proposals in each year’s annual business plan are consistent with their 5-year plan, they should also be required to demonstrate how it is consistent with the longer term 10-year specification.
- 3.6 The TfN Strategic Transport Plan sets out the key role that our rail system has to play in transforming the North in terms of economic growth, reducing the environmental impact of our transport system and improving social inclusion. The operator business planning process can be used to start building the case for expansion of the rail offer. TfN’s work to develop the Northern Playbook (to provide advice to partners on how to strengthen transport business cases so that they better reflect the economic context and wider societal and environmental benefits) will support this ambition.
- 3.7 In terms of the immediate task, it is expected that the template for business plans for 2025/26 will follow previous years’ format and cover the following areas:
- Leadership and Management (including culture)
 - People Plan (the workforce including recruitment, training, and diversity)
 - Collaboration Plan (working with other parts of the industry and to deliver wider economic and social benefits)
 - Train Service Operations Plan (the timetable and trains to be operated)
 - Customer and Communities Plan (meeting the needs of passengers and communities served)
 - Revenue Plan (growing the revenue and responding to new markets)
 - Environmental Sustainability Plan (contributing to decarbonisation)
 - Accessibility Plan (both physical and broader access such as information)
 - Levelling Up (this is unique to the business plans for Northern and TPT).
- 3.8 Under the arrangements set out in the Rail North Partnership Agreement, TfN is able to input the North’s priorities and be involved in the business planning process. For 2025/26 it is proposed that that the working arrangements will be:
- Rail North Committee inputs at 3 key stages of the process:
 - i. Initial priorities (Committee meeting in July 2024)
 - ii. Finalising the specification for operators (September 2024)
 - iii. Finalising the plan once proposals have been received (December 2024/January 2025)
 - The Committee Member Working Group will be reestablished to oversee TfN’s input at stages ii and iii and a meeting will be arranged following this meeting;

- Our role through the Rail North Agreement enables a dialogue with the Rail Minister on the budget implications and trade-offs that may have to be made, and which may require other operators to step in, (reflecting the fact that the budget is a reserved matter for the Secretary of State);
- A number of lead officers from partners are once again embedded into the process collaborating with us and RNP and attending meetings/workshops.

3.9 Under the rail reform agenda, we have emphasised that TfN's role as the Secretary of State's statutory advisor on pan-regionally significant priorities must be reflected in any proposal taken forward. The updated Strategic Transport Plan (STP), adopted by the TfN Board in March 2024, forms statutory advice on how the North's transport system needs to develop in order to realise the strategic outcomes agreed by the North's Political and Business leaders.

3.10 In this way the STP provides the context within the rail industry (both infrastructure and operators) should develop its detailed proposals and plans for each successive 5-year investment period. It is therefore proposed that the agreed STP priorities are used as the basis for TfN's strategic guidance for train operators' business plans. Although TfN's formal role relates to Northern and TPT, it is recommended that TfN also has discussions with other key operators so that their business planning also takes into account the requirements of the STP. The main points from the STP which Train Operators will be required to consider include:

- a) To achieve the strategic economic, environmental, and social outcomes set out in the STP it is necessary to plan for and deliver sustained growth in both passenger and freight demand, with a target to triple rail freight's modal share and accommodate up to a tripling of passenger demand by 2050.
- b) There needs to be a focus on delivery of TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU) as an initial phase of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). As well as facilitating delivery of TRU, there should be an emphasis on building demand and developing new markets in advance of work to develop the business case for the later stages of NPR.
- c) In order to encourage and facilitate a shift to rail in advance of the implementation of these major schemes, a number of more immediate measures need to be planned and implemented as a phased programme of co-ordinated works, including bringing all stations in the North up to a common set of standards (especially with regards accessibility), progress on integrated and SMART ticketing, efficient linespeed improvements, responsive timetabling, moves towards a genuine "seven day" railway, and a programme of many small-scale enhancements to improve reliability, punctuality and resilience.

3.11 Together, the above measures will underpin accelerated economic growth arising from a more agglomerated labour market, enable a sustainable and decarbonised transport system, and reduce transport-related social exclusion.

3.12 Based on the experience of business planning in previous year, in addition to the operator's business as usual work, it is recommended that the following priorities are fed into the work for the 2025/26 business plans.

Priorities

3.13 In collaboration with TfN, Northern and TPT are:

- a) Through the delivery of initiatives including the Committee's Accessibility Task and Finish Working Group programme, Stations as a Place and rolling stock

procurement and refurbishment, improve the level of accessibility, facilities, and passenger safety whilst in and around the network;

- b) To use the lessons learnt and best practice from TransPennine Route Upgrade work carried out to date to improve the approach to journey planning and disruption messaging to enhance the customer experience and promote customer confidence, including delivering consistent guidance during planned and unplanned disruption;
- c) To take advantage of changing markets and new and emerging opportunities including initiatives such as the seven-day railway to support the leisure and tourism, to grow customer demand and revenue;
- d) To support TfN and RNP, and work with other operators to develop the Training Academy initiative for the North;
- e) To consider and reflect TfN's Strategic Transport Plan priorities, including levelling up, decarbonisation and the wider social, environmental, and economic benefits and addressing Transport Related Social Exclusion, in future timetable development.

3.14 The Committee is asked to consider and discuss the priorities set out above.

4. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications to Transport for the North arising within this report.

Resource Implications

4.2 There are no direct resourcing implications to Transport for the North as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

4.3 Legal implications are included within this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

4.4 There are no further risk implications as a result of this report. There are two corporate risks which are being managed in relation to the viability of train services and future investment decisions and Transport for the North having a reduced role in the rail industry.

Environmental Implications

4.5 This report does not constitute or influence a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive and therefore does not stimulate the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or EIA

4.6 Passenger rail and rail freight has an essential part to play in achieving our decarbonisation objectives within Transport for the North's Decarbonisation Strategy, particularly around reducing road vehicle mileage.

Equality and Diversity

4.7 Transport for the North have not undertaken an Equality Impact Assessment, however the business plan priorities outlined in this paper have the potential to impact customers, therefore it is our view that Equality Impact Assessments should be undertaken by the train operating companies which are implementing the changes to ensure that they have both identified and addressed any equality and accessibility requirements, prior to implementation of the change.

Consultations

4.8 Transport for the North Members are being consulted through this report.

5. Background Papers

5.1 There are no background papers.

6. Appendices

6.1 There are no appendices to this report.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (*if applicable*)

TfN	Transport for the North
TPT	TransPennine Trains Ltd
DfT	Department for Transport
RNP	Rail North Partnership
NPR	Northern Powerhouse Rail
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment

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