

Rail North Committee Minutes

**Wednesday 21 October 2020
MS Teams**

Present:

Attendee

Cllr Liam Robinson
Cllr Karen Shore
Cllr Trevor Ainsworth
Cllr Allen Brett

Cllr Nick Forbes
Cllr Richard Hannigan
Cllr Keith Little
Cllr Don Mackenzie
Cllr Heather Scott
Cllr Judith Blake

Representing

Liverpool City Region
Cheshire and the Potteries
East Midlands Authorities
Greater Manchester Combined
Authority
North East Combined Authority
Humber Authorities
Lancashire and Cumbria
North Yorkshire
Tees Valley Combined Authority
West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Also in Attendance

Attendee

Cllr Chris Brewis (Observer)
Sam Caughey
Cavendish Elithorn
Gillian Worley
Nick Donovan
Jerry Farquharson

Representing

East Midlands Authority
Department for Transport
Department for Transport
Department for Transport
Northern Rail
TPE

Officers in Attendance:

Name

Barry White
Gary Rich
Dawn Madin
Jim Bamford
Adam Timewell
Julie Openshaw
Rosemary Lyon
Gary Bogan
Deborah Dimock
David Hogarth

Job Title

Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer
Director of Business Capabilities
Head of Investment Planning
Head of Rail Service Outputs
Head of Legal
Legal and Democratic Services Officer
Rail North Partnership Director
Solicitor
Strategic Rail Director

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

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Mayor Burnham and Mayor Jarvis.

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 July 2020 were considered and their accuracy as a correct record confirmed. There were no issues arising from the minutes.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July be approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Priorities for Future Rail Services

- 4.1 The report on the priorities for future rail services was received by Members. The Strategic Rail Director highlighted key areas of the report before Members had the opportunity to comment and ask questions.

The Strategic Rail Director explained that the report highlights the uncertainty around demand and revenue and the impact on subsidy levels which is currently severe and highlights the risks for future service developments.

He explained that the proposal in the report brings together local knowledge and evidence with the train operators in a new collaboration. This is part of the resetting of the relationship in order to 'build back better' and ensure that passengers can use the service with confidence.

- 4.2 Cllr Little raised the issue of agreed improvements made by Northern Trains and requested an update on achievements so far, what they hope to achieve and if there is anything that they will be unable to deliver. The Strategic Rail Director will provide a note to Cllr Little updating him on progress.
- 4.3 Cllr Brewis stated that the biggest issue facing public transport is restoring public confidence in using it.

In response to Cllr Brewis the Strategic Rail Director explained that this is a great challenge, however this may be made easier by the current positive performance of trains which may make train travel more attractive as a result of the positive base being built from. He also highlighted the better relationship that now exists with the operators.

- 4.4 The Chief Executive commented that the change in travel patterns in people working from home will leave a gap. He explained that it is important to now look at how passenger numbers can be driven up and how new passengers can be attracted to using the trains.

Resolved:

- 1) The report be noted
- 2) Transport for the North engages with the industry on the medium and long-term response to the challenges as set out in this report.

5. Rail Reform Matters

- 5.1 The report on Rail Reform Matters was received by Members. Cllr Blake then highlighted the key points within the report.

She explained that one of the pieces of work which has been being looked at which links closely to the report is the progress around the Williams Review and this work is now moving on and may form the basis of a White Paper.

She explained that progress is being made on the agenda and a positive meeting was held with the Minister Chris Heaton Harris MP where he reaffirmed his commitment to more devolved decision making in the North.

A positive meeting has also been held with the Secretary of State where a discussion was held on the submission of the Northern Transport Charter. Cllr Blake asked the Chief Executive to update on the current situation in relation to this.

Cllr Blake highlighted that there is an incredibly important role going forward to ensure that we have a strong voice in terms of shaping services.

- 5.2 The Chief Executive explained that following the Transport for the North Board he wrote to the Secretary of State on the issue of the Northern Transport Charter. The Secretary of State has responded and his letter has been circulated to Members. A meeting has also been had with officials about how to take the Devolution agenda forward and a follow up meeting is planned on this matter. He is happy to update the Board and the Committee on this once it has happened.

- 5.3 Mr. Sam Caughey (Department for Transport) explained that the Williams Review slowed due to the pandemic however things are now progressing. He explained further that the Department's response to the Covid pandemic is in effect putting what Williams is recommending into action.
- 5.4 Cllr Shore welcomed and supported the report. She highlighted the cross border services from North Wales which are important to the local economy.
- 5.5 Cllr Scott requested that Tees Valley be involved with any work from the start.
- 5.6 The Chair thanked Cllr Blake and her team for their hard work on this.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted
- 2) That the guide to Rail in the North be endorsed.

6. Update on Operational Rail Issues

- 6.1 Members received the update report on Operational Rail issues and the Head of Rail Service Outputs highlighted key areas of the report before Members were given the opportunity to comment and ask questions.
- 6.2 Cllr Little highlighted the issue of service uplifts and questioned whether this is the correct thing to do in the current climate, with so many empty trains.
- The Head of Rail Service Outputs explained that the right balance needed to be found and that he would raise this issue with the industry.
- 6.3 Cllr Scott welcomed the Darlington to Saltburn uplift. She also expressed concern over the some TPE services that are not running and asked when they would be reintroduced.
- Mr. Jerry Farquharson explained that services could be switched on as resources become available. He stated that the industry needs to act together to increase the demand, so that services can reliably and affordably be put back on.
- Regarding the Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport service he explained that there are crew social distancing issues impacting on this particular service this is preventing the service being put back on.
- 6.4 Cllr Mackenzie highlighted the Harrogate to York line where North Yorkshire County Council are investing £10 million on track and signaling upgrades in order to double the number of services between the two. He explained that Northern have now informed them that they are unable to

do this from May 2021 as driver training has been unable to take place during the pandemic.

- 6.5 The Rail North Partnership Director explained that even before Covid both Northern and TPE had a significant amount of driver training to do in order to bring in their new fleets. Covid has made this an ongoing issue. The drop off as a result of the Covid second wave is affecting the train operators in terms of their ability to catch up with training.

He further stated that it is better to know what is being run and to have confidence in it rather than taking services out with short or no notice. He explained that the situation regarding this issue would remain fluid.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted
- 2) That members endorse the approach to Boxing Day services, including securing early commitment to services from 2021 onwards.

7. Update on matters reserved to the Secretary of State

- 7.1 Members received the report from the Head of Rail Service Outputs who highlighted key parts of the report, after which Members were able to make comments and ask questions.

- 7.2 On the issue of the Liverpool to Norwich route the Chair stated that he understood and agreed with the reasons for not changing the operator during the pandemic, but stressed the importance of bringing forward delivery of earlier/later services.

The Chair also welcomed the opportunity for there to be a Member Working group on the future direction on TransPennine Express.

The Chair was supportive of the Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) in order to keep the trains running during the current crisis. However, he expressed concern with the 1.5% management fee included within them that he sees as profit being made from public money at a time when this money could be used to support those who need it most. The Chair proposed that a letter be sent to the Secretary of State asking for a review of the ERMA's removing the management fee. He then explained that if this is not successful then the operating groups should be approached to work with Transport for the North on this.

- 7.3 Cllr Shore supported the proposal to write to the Secretary of State.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted
- 2) That an appropriate member-led working group be established to guide the North's input into the future service contracts.

- 3) That Transport for the North continue to press for the plans to implement the splitting of the Liverpool – Norwich service and improve the type of train operating on the service at the earliest possible opportunity, followed by a transfer of service.
- 4) That a letter should be written to the Secretary of state requesting a review and removal of the 1.5% management fee in the ERMA's.

8. Business Planning and commissioning

- 8.1 Members received the report of the Strategic Rail Director who then highlighted the key areas of the report.

The Strategic Rail Director highlighted the proposal that Member's financial contributions to Transport for the North would remain the same in 2020/21 apart from the usual indexation. He also stated that the budget process will be concluded later in the year, is currently in draft form and subject to the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

In relation to business planning he explained that Members will have an input into the agenda of the Committee as well as the opportunity to commission reports. He also highlighted the delivery of new trains which was almost complete at the onset of the pandemic as well as the positive current working relationship with the operators and the industry which he wants to build on.

The Strategic Rail Director informed Members that following the last Transport for the North Board he had been asked to review the Committee dates and proposed moving the March 2021 meeting to early April subject to Member agreement.

Resolved:

- 1) That the paper be noted.
- 2) That the Committee note progress on delivery of the business plan and improved passenger outcomes despite the challenges faced by the industry, particularly the impact of reduced demand due to the pandemic.
- 3) That the Committee endorses the approach set out in the report to the 2021/22 business plan.
- 4) That the Committee endorses the proposed forward plan set out in Appendix 2.
- 5) That the date of the meeting currently planned for 17 March 2021 is amended as set out in the report.

9. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED: that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, there will be disclosure of confidential information as defined in Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and/or exempt information as defined in

paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)

10. Private Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 10.1 The private minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2020 were considered and their accuracy as a correct record confirmed. There were no issues arising from the minutes.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July be approved as a true and accurate record.

11. Infrastructure investment: Central Manchester

- 11.1 The report on Infrastructure Investment in Central Manchester was received by Members. They were then invited to ask questions and make comments on the update.

Resolved:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That the discussed recommendations be agreed.