

Rail North Committee

- Subject:** Rail North Partnership Update
- Author:** Adam Timewell, Rail North Partnership
- Sponsor:** Gary Bogan, Rail North Partnership Director
David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director
- Meeting Date:** 25 March 2021

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To update the Committee on operational rail matters:
- May 2021 Timetable Change
 - December 2021 Timetable Change
 - East Coast Mainline Timetable for 2022
 - Boxing Day Services 2021
 - Operational Performance

There is also an update on contractual and business planning matters.

- 1.2 The Committee is asked to note the updates for each workstream.

2. Timetabling Matters

2.1 May 2021 Timetable Change

With the government's easing of lockdown restrictions, all train operators are looking at what this means for their service provision and how they can meet anticipated demand. They highlight the many unknown variables in relation to how, when and where people will start travelling again although certain pinch-points have been identified including bank holidays and the return of schools.

2.2 Northern Trains Ltd

Northern has focussed on reliability and stability for future uplifts in its timetables. To protect reliability between now and the May 2021 timetable, it will maintain the existing timetable and provide a balance between the impact of Covid -19 on its staff and customer demand.

Up until 17 May 2021, Northern will run its January 2021 timetable which is 66 per cent of its pre-Covid capacity, with some strengthening

on key school routes and some standby units and crews to support any potential capacity issues along the coastal routes during bank holidays and warm weather.

From 17 May 2021, it will deliver an uplift in services and capacity with an emphasis on catering for the anticipated demand for UK 'staycation' leisure travel during the summer season.

Like all train operators, Northern needs to address its driver training backlog. The operator had a legacy of outstanding training prior to the pandemic and during 2020, Northern along with other operators, had to pause its training programmes. This has added to the challenge of ensuring its staff are available and up-to-date on their training. With training resumed, Northern maintains a dedicated focus on addressing the backlog.

2.3 **TransPennine Express**

From 8 March 2021, TPE introduced additional services between York and Scarborough, and Huddersfield and Manchester to support the return to school. It is currently operating an emergency timetable which is 44 per cent of its pre-Covid19 capacity. The timetable will then see a major uplift on 29 March 2021 when the operator will return to its December 2020 timetable, representing 60 per cent of its pre-Covid 19 capacity. On 17 May 2021, it will continue delivering the December 2020 timetable but adding some extra strengthening to match demand. This means that on some routes, three-car trains will be boosted to six-car trains and the operator is mindful that it needs to be agile to respond to its leisure markets.

2.4 **December 2021 Timetable**

Both operators are currently focussing on delivery of the May 2021 timetable and there are no major changes for the December timetable. Northern and TPE confirm that any further uplifts are likely to be gradual to help maintain the higher performance levels witnessed throughout Covid -19.

TPE will further strengthen services from 13 September 2021 and review its service provision.

2.5 **East Coast Mainline timetable**

As part of the December 2021 timetable, it was planned to introduce an LNER service between London to Edinburgh with a faster journey time of four hours. However, there is not space for the additional planned long-distance high-speed path between Northallerton and Newcastle which is needed to facilitate the four-hour journey time. All LNER and CrossCountry services on this section of route have firm access rights whereas TPE's service from Manchester to Newcastle only has contingent rights between York and Newcastle. If LNER receives

the path, it will mean that TPE's service (1 train per hour from Manchester airport to Newcastle,) will need to terminate at York.

An operator-led consultation was due to take place in March but has now been postponed until June. This will allow more time to gather information from the performance models and junction and platforming review. It's anticipated that the delay will not affect the delivery of any changes in May 2022. TPE has been asked to prepare for all outcomes.

2.6 **Boxing Day Timetable**

A working group made up of Network Rail, Transport for the North, NTL and the Rail North Partnership Management Team, has been established and will meet regularly to progress this work. A verbal update will be given at the Rail North Committee meeting.

3. **Contracts and Business Planning**

3.1 **Prior Information Notice – Northern Trains Ltd**

On 1 March 2021, the Department for Transport (DfT) issued a Prior Information Notice (PIN) signalling its intention to prepare for a new contract following the end of current contract which expires on 1 March 2022.

The DfT seeks to obtain a Direct Award (DA) as the new contract for up to five years with a fixed period of two years.

Northern has operated the Northern franchise under a Services Agreement since the early termination of Arriva Rail North's (ARN) franchise in March 2020. A Services Agreement was put in place for two years which was procured under emergency provisions, allowing a two-year DA contract with no ability to extend. Future procurement plans to engage with the private sector will not be sufficiently developed before the current Services Agreement ends. To bridge the gap until procurement and contractual arrangements are in place, it's proposed to issue a new DA contract with Northern however under the rules, a PIN must be issued one year before the end of the current Services Agreement resulting in the publication of the notice earlier this month.

3.2 **Train Operator Business Planning**

Transport for the North has arranged a Working Group with the Rail North Committee to discuss the business plans for both operators.

As background to the business planning process, the DfT is mindful of the need to work closely with operators to support future demand and revenue recovery. To facilitate this, the Department has developed and implemented a new business planning process for all train operators

which aims to improve financial performance and industry efficiency whilst still delivering for passengers

The business plans allow the industry to deliver more efficiently and to stimulate recovery from the impacts of Covid -19. They include marketing and growth initiatives that will aim to ensure passengers return to using rail once Covid -19 restrictions are lifted.

This is an important first step in giving them and the train operators the ability to implement government priorities for the railway more flexibly while utilising operator and owning group expertise to help drive revenue, passenger recovery and an efficient railway. It will also help ensure a coherent cross-industry approach to stimulating future demand.

3.3 **TPE - Direct Award Update**

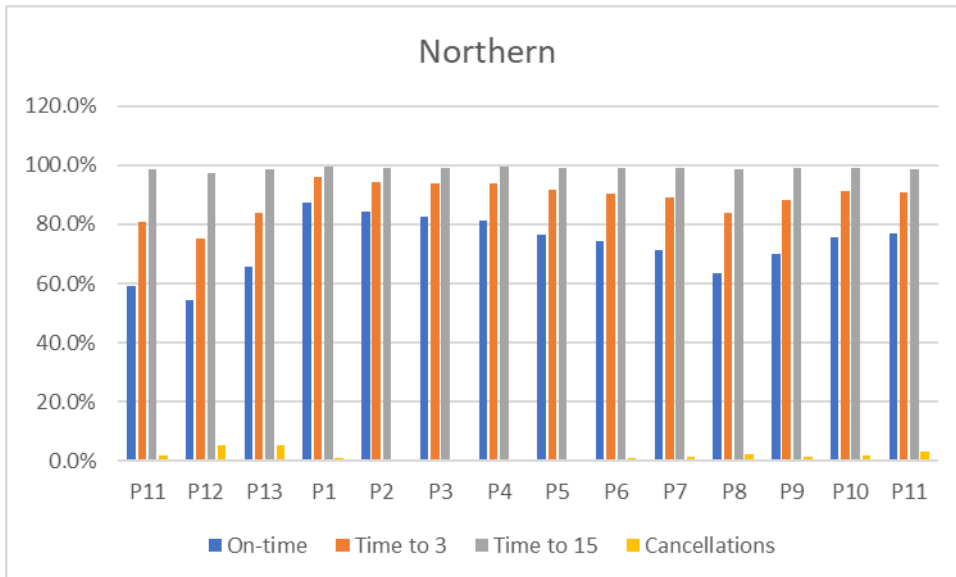
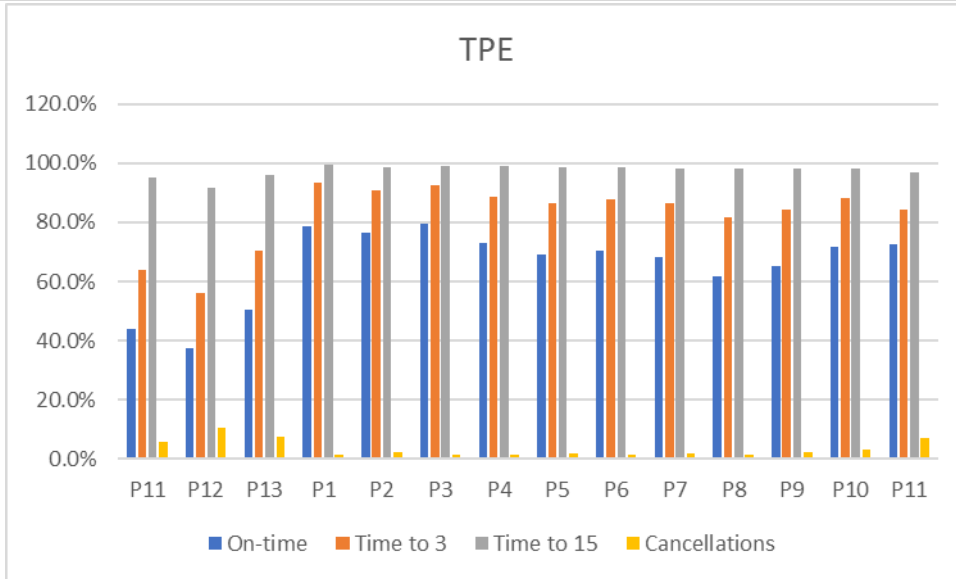
Negotiations are continuing on TPE's proposed Direct Award and Transport for the North and Network Rail continue to be an integral part of the process. At the time of writing, a briefing session is planned to update committee members on the contents of the contract and its implications.

4. Rail Performance:

- 4.1 Operational performance is strong and continues to remain well above pre-Covid levels. For example, just prior to Covid, Northern's on-time levels were 54.2% and are now at over 77% and TPE's on-time levels were 37.5% and are now at 72%. However, whilst still well above pre-Covid levels, increases in service levels have already led to small declines in performance. Further increases following lockdown could also lead to a decrease as the volume of trains on the network, the increase in passengers travelling and an increase in dwell time reduces the timeliness of services.

Demands continue to be suppressed as the national lockdown continues. Data shows that passenger demand is between 10-15% of pre-Covid levels. However, the roadmap published by the government for ending lockdown is expected to lead to a surge in leisure travel over the first two quarters of 2021/2022.

The below graph highlights the trends of both operators since the beginning of this year.



5. Recommendation:

5.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the report.

List of Background Documents:

There are no background papers to this report.

Required Considerations

Equalities:

Age	Yes	No
Disability	Yes	No
Gender Reassignment	Yes	No
Pregnancy and Maternity	Yes	No
Race	Yes	No
Religion or Belief	Yes	No
Sex	Yes	No
Sexual Orientation	Yes	No

Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Equalities	A full Impact assessment has not been carried out because the report is for noting only.	Adam Timewell	David Hoggarth

Environment and Sustainability

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Sustainability / Environment – including considerations regarding Active Travel and Wellbeing	A full impact assessment has not been carried out because the report is for noting only.	Adam Timewell	David Hoggarth

Legal

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Legal	The Transport for the North Legal Team has confirmed there are no new legal implications for Transport for the North as a result of this report	Deborah Dimock	Julie Openshaw

Finance

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Finance	Transport for the North Finance Team has confirmed there are no financial implications. All the matters covered in the report are matters for which the Secretary of State retains financial responsibility.	Paul Kelly	Iain Craven

Resource

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Resource	Transport for the North HR Team has confirmed there are no direct resource implications as a result of this report.	Stephen Hipwell	Dawn Madin

Risk

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Risk	Risks associated with timetable changes are captured at the Corporate Risk Reporting level.	Haddy Njie	Iain Craven

Consultation

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Consultation	A consultation has not been carried out because the report provides an update only.	Adam Timewell	David Hoggarth