

Rail North Partnership: Operational Rail Update

Subject: Rail North Partnership: Operational Rail Update

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Sponsor: David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director

Meeting Date: Wednesday 23 June 2021

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To update the committee on operational rail matters and to ask members to note the information in the report.

2. Covid Recovery Timetables:

2.1 [Northern Trains Ltd](#)

The operator continues to perform well with around 70 per cent of its trains On-Time for the railway period starting May 30 to date – June 11. Trespassers and signal failures were amongst the issues impacting performance.

In response to Covid -19, Northern Trains Ltd (NTL) is pursuing a resource-led approach to timetabling. The operator continues to balance its timetable with available resources and customer demand. Similar to other operators, some services for December 2021 are not yet able to be reintroduced. This has been partly due to a training backlog caused by the pandemic which has led to fewer available trainees to support a wider reintroduction of services. In addition, East Midlands Railway (EMR) is unable to cascade its 15 x Class 156s which were due to be delivered in time for December 2021. NTL doesn't yet have a date for when it will receive the units.

As a result, the operator has had to make some difficult choices about where to prioritise resource. It has developed a plan that takes into account the number of train crew likely to be available at a depot level and anticipated availability of rolling stock. The service coverage remains broadly as per May 2021 apart from some exceptions. These include the Liverpool to Warrington Bank Quay route which will see its hourly service reintroduced. There is a withdrawal of the Hull-Bridlington service off-peak only and the Hull-Leeds-Halifax service sees an increase from a two-hourly service to one train per hour. The

Morecambe/Lancaster – Skipton service will increase from six trains to eight per day and the current Knaresborough to Leeds will be extended to York. The industry is still working to condensed timelines to achieve the changes for December 2021.

2.2 TransPennine Express

Performance remains strong at 94 per cent On-Time for June to date (June 14) and the operator has seen demand rise with figures regularly above 40 per cent of pre-Covid levels, Monday to Friday and 50 per cent at the weekends. Whilst social distancing is a personal and social responsibility, it is being monitored and similar to other operators, there has been social distancing breaches on some sections of the TPE routes. A total of 31 per cent of Class 185s breached social distancing rules between 31 May – 6 June. The most reported breaches during this week were on Saturday, June 5 when TPE had 42 per cent of Class 185 services breaching social distancing capacity. The most frequent source of breaches included sections on the Manchester to Hull service at 29 per cent, the Manchester to Cleethorpes service at 25 per cent and Manchester Airport to Redcar Central at 23 per cent. The Class 185s are the only fleet to be referenced in terms of capacity breaches because they have a fully functioning automatic passenger counting (APC) system.

Other operators are also seeing rising capacity issues and communications efforts have been doubled to inform passengers of alternative services and to emphasise personal responsibility. Passengers can also take advantage of travel alerts to help them maintain social distancing. The 'Alert Me by Messenger' technology tells rail users how disruption and crowding may affect their journey by providing alternative routes and is available on National Rail platforms. It is due to be offered by most train companies later this year.

TPE's December 2021 service offer is currently as per the May 2021 timetable – in line with the government's instructions to maintain performance. The plan is to increase service levels for May 2022 although this is dependent on passenger demand. There are opportunities to increase services during the next 12 months, particularly during the summer for leisure travel but again this will be dependent on people returning to rail.

In a separate issue, the backlog of driver training remains as a result of the pandemic. This affects new drivers and drivers that are out of competency. Whilst this doesn't affect the existing service levels, drivers with diversionary route knowledge gives TPE increased flexibility. This is important in handling unforeseen circumstances during disruption such as the Transpennine Upgrade when more drivers may be required with this alternative route knowledge.

TPE has a new managing director in Matthew Golton who started his role on 1 June. Matthew joins the operator from First Rail where he

was Business Development Director. He replaces Liz Collins who has taken up a position with West Coast Partnership. Matthew will be introducing himself at the Rail North Committee on June 23.

2.3 CrossCountry, LNER and Avanti

Based on the industry assumption of a rollover of the May 2021 timetable, CrossCountry is planning to run 99 per cent of its services on its regional routes in December whilst the long distance intercity routes remain at the current one train per hour and double sets. Similar to the regional routes, some station calls will still be omitted however this is being reviewed.

LNER is building up to 100 per cent of its timetable over the coming months now that the East Coast Upgrade is complete. This will need to take the Hitachi fleet issues into account which means it is running slightly fewer services than it would otherwise. To note:

- LNER's first Middlesbrough service – a daily return – is due to start in December.
- The operator is planning to start serving Reston in Scotland (once a day in each direction) from December, dependent on this new station being built in time.

Avanti is still working through its timetable proposal and options to incrementally step up services are being looked at as part of the work.

3. **Rolling Stock Update**

3.1 TransPennine Express

In May the fleet of 800 series Hitachi trains were removed from service as a precaution when cracks were found on the lifting points of the trains. Following safety checks, TransPennine Express, Hull Trains and ScotRail were able to resume operating services across their routes. The Hitachi issue is not thought to be a significant risk for TPE due to the lower mileage of its fleet. However, at the time of writing, TPE had five of its 19 'Nova 1' 802 trains out of service for various maintenance reasons not related to the LNER defect. TPE remains able to cover the timetable with its remaining fleet.

There is one Nova 3 train left to deliver which is going through its final acceptance checks. Handover to TPE is expected by the end of the week commencing June 13. The fleet roll-out began in mid-2018 and has suffered delay due to Covid.

3.2 Northern Trains Ltd

During a routine examination on April 3, a class 195 was found to have a stress fracture in the Yaw Damper bracket – designed to reduce

swaying motion in the carriage. Cracks were found in a total of 25 trains following inspections. The defect was in Northern's new CAF fleet, affecting the Class 195s and the Class 331s. An interim solution has been developed and these have been fitted to the fleet. A total of 24 are now back in service and the priority has been to strengthen the Blackpool service, increasing four carriages to six, followed by the Blackpool to Hazel Grove and Liverpool to Blackpool services. The faults meant that NTL had to delay the reintroduction of three services in the May timetable however these have now been reinstated.

3.4 **Dispensation**

NTL has been granted a Person with Reduced Mobility (PRM) dispensation for 10 x Class 153s and 6 x Class 150s/ 3 car to maintain the service levels of the planned 2021 uplift. They will be coupled with a compliant train and NTL will ensure that any assistance booked on to these services will direct passengers to the fully compliant part of the train. Relevant staff will be fully briefed on the arrangements to provide a consistent service and there will be extra signage to inform people of the arrangements.

4. **National Rail Contracts (NRC)**

4.1 **TPE – Recap on issuing of the Direct Award**

The new National Rail Contract (NRC) started on Sunday 30th May at 02:00. The contract is for a two-year term to May 2023 with options to extend by up to two further years to May 2025. Under the NRC model, the DFT retains the revenue risk and a substantial amount of the cost risk. For TPE, the fixed management fee is £2.3 million per annum and there is the opportunity to earn up to an additional £5.2m which is the maximum attainable performance fee. The contract is designed to reward the achievement of operational targets including punctuality. It also emphasises collaboration and includes commitments to a new sustainability strategy, integration with other modes of public transport and improvements to employee accommodation.

4.2 **NTL – National Rail Contracts progress**

The RNP Management Team has had initial conversations with NTL and some stakeholders about the potential timeline and is now liaising with the DFT on more detailed timing. The team plans to discuss options under the NRC with Transport for the North and its members in July.

5.0 **Business Planning**

5.1 Work is underway to develop next year's business plan with an opportunity for Transport for the North members to contribute throughout the process. The RNP Management Team will work with Transport for the North to identify how this will be done however it

must be noted that the aim of the business plan is for contract managers to ensure train operators have the processes and capabilities in place to deliver its contracts.

Annual Business Plan Timescales for contract teams:

- **01 April – 30 September:** Assessment of current year, development of plans and collaboration discussion on the following year
- **30 September:** Issue Request for Business Plan
- **15 December:** Train operator submits draft Business Plan
- **15 December - 27 February:** Collaborative dialogue and agreement of Business Plans
- **28 February:** Agreement and issue of final Business Plan
- **29 February – 31 March:** Contractualisation and mobilisation
- **01 April:** Commence Business Plan

5.2 **TPE Business Planning**

Whilst the business plans largely have an inward focus, TPE has a number of funds including money for Station Improvements, Minor Works and Community Rail Partnerships. It is required to work with local authorities and community rail networks to allocate the funding and will be writing to stakeholders shortly with a request for ideas and to seek match funding.

5.3 **NTL Business Planning**

The operator is planning to share content of its existing business plan in July and hold follow-up sessions in the autumn.

6. Boxing Day Services

A four-way working group was set up earlier this year with representatives from Transport for the North, RNP, NTL and Network Rail. There have been detailed discussions about what might be possible for 2021, 2022 and 2023 based on scheduled major engineering works and which routes are likely to have more demand and revenue potential. Boxing Day is an opportunity for Network Rail to carry out its engineering work which requires more than 50-hour blockades. Strategic discussions need to take place to identify the most appropriate times of the year to carry these essential works out which limits the impact on passengers. The current Boxing Day service

aspirations currently conflict with this planned work including the Transpennine Route Upgrade and ongoing major work at Newcastle.

Liverpool City Region has been identified as the only location with no major engineering works and offers the most potential for operating a 2021 Boxing Day Service. In discussion with Liverpool City Region, a service between St Helen's – Liverpool Lime Street will be taken forward for further investment discussions and any subsequent approvals.

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 contains updates only,	David Hoggarth	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 it is not required.	David Hoggarth	David Hoggarth

Legal

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Legal	The legal implications have been considered and are included in the report.	Julie Openshaw	Dawn Madin

Finance

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Finance	TfN Finance Team has confirmed there are no financial implications.	Paul Kelly	Iain Craven

Resource

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Resource	There are no direct resourcing implications as a result of this report	Stephen Hipwell	Dawn Madin

Risk

Yes	No
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Consideration	Comment	Responsible Officer	Director
Risk	A risk assessment has been carried out and the key risks are included in the report.	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 it is not required	David Hoggarth	David Hoggarth