

Rail North Committee Strategic Rail Director Consultation Call Minutes

**Wednesday 23 June 2021
Virtual**

Present:

Attendee

CLlr Liam Robinson
CLlr Craig Browne
Mayor Andy Burnham

CLlr Keith Little
Mayor Jamie Driscoll
Mayor Dan Jarvis
CLlr Susan Hinchcliffe

Local Authority

Liverpool City Region;
Cheshire & the Potteries;
Greater Manchester Combined
Authority

Lancashire Cumbria;
North of Tyne Combined Authority;
Sheffield City Region;
West Yorkshire Combined Authority &
York;

Partners in Attendance:

Richard George
Rob Warnes
Matthew Golton

Northern
Transpennine Express

Officers in Attendance:

Name

Gary Rich
Dawn Madin
Adam Timewell
Julie Openshaw
Jim Bamford
Tim Wood
Rosemary Lyon
Salim Patel
Gary Bogan
David Hoggarth

Job Title

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

**Item
No:**

Item

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the Consultation call and thanked Cllr Trevor Ainsworth for all his hard work for the Committee following a change in portfolio in his constituent authority.

1.2 Apologies were received from Mayor Houchen and Cllr Scott.

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 25 March 2021 were considered for their accuracy and Members were asked to confirm if there were any accuracy issues.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March be noted.

4. Priorities for Future Rail Services

4.1 The report of the Programme Manager was received by Members. The Programme Manager then highlighted the key areas of the report.

4.2 Mayor Driscoll stated that trains to London are positive but not at the expense of rail users. He highlighted a number of services in his area that will be affected by the proposals as well as their impact. He reminded Members that this is happening as a result of firm rights being offered to Virgin Trains eight years ago with the expectation that infrastructure would improve which hasn't happened.

Mayor Driscoll proposed that the timetable changes should be put on hold whilst a taskforce is set up by the DfT and lead by someone independent. The taskforce will then examine the constraints and puts forward long term and short-term options to resolve these issues and then puts forward timetable changes aligned to growth and capacity.

4.3 Members were in agreement with Mayor Driscoll's proposal.

4.4 Cllr Hinchcliffe highlighted the fact that Bradford would also be affected by the proposals highlighted in the report. She highlighted the need for Investment to be made and that these commitments need to be kept in the future. She questioned what these investments are and where they are in the DfT's pipeline. She stated that the North needs both North-

South as well as East -West connectivity in order to ensure economic sustainability.

- 4.5 The Chair stated that this issue affects the entire North of England. He highlighted the disappointment of those on the West of Manchester at the loss of the direct connection to Edinburgh. He highlighted his frustrations that changes to the Treasury Green Book rules had not yet flowed through to investment in the North.
- 4.6 The Strategic Rail Director said that the East Coast Mainline proposals are a test for the White Paper principles of joining things up with an 'overall guiding mind.' He suggested putting the proposal to the DfT as soon as possible.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee is asked to note the progress on the Roadmap to Recovery
- 2) That the Committee is asked to note the ongoing consultations on changes to ECML services from 2022 and provide comments on the draft TfN response outlined in 4.8 of the report.
- 3) That the Committee accept Mayor Driscoll's proposal for a taskforce to be included in TfN's response.

5. Rail Reform Matters

- 5.1 The report of the Head of Rail Specification & Delivery was received by Members. The Strategic Rail Director then highlighted the key areas of the report.
- 5.2 Mayor Burnham outlined the importance of being the architects of a new Governance and political structure for rail across the North of England. He then went on to highlight the tension that exists on a national level and stated that he believes that TfN is not as supported as he believes it should be by Government and expressed his determination to keep TfN involved in one form or another. He stated that when the rail industry is left to its own devices it forgets about the North of England.

He stated that Members can't accept a 'National guiding mind' where there is no clear voice for the North of England. He then outlined what he believes the new geography should look like with TfN having a key role to play in this for the North. He suggested that proposals should be developed immediately on this rather than waiting.

- 5.3 Members were supportive of the proposal being put forward by Mayor Burnham.
- 5.4 The Interim Chief Executive highlighted that he believed the biggest issue that the North is currently facing is HS2 using money that should

be being used on Northern projects. He reiterated the importance of the Integrated Rail Plan being published as soon as possible and stated that he does not advocate the May 2022 timetable change for the LNER service take place.

- 5.5 The Chair supported Members views and agreed with Mayor Burnham that this needs to move at pace and take control of the situation. He stated that he was unclear as to where devolution fits within the White Paper.

He then highlighted an underlying issue in the White Paper of driving costs out of the industry. He explained that the rolling stock leasing companies have not been left untouched in this as this is an expensive way of providing new trains.

- 5.6 Mayor Burnham stated that TfN is a critical force in areas where devolution hasn't yet happened. He stressed the importance of this for all areas of the North and that there should be deep devolution with the TfN umbrella protecting constituent authorities.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the White Paper, and its focus on addressing the problems caused by the past fragmentation of the railway industry;
- 2) That Transport for the North continues to seek clarity from Government that the existing arrangements and statutory powers through Transport for the North are not proposed to be changed, and can therefore provide a strong building block for Transport for the North's future role.

6. Rail North Partnership Update

- 6.1 The report of the Rail North Partnership Director was received by Members. He then highlighted the key areas within the report and updated Members on progress during the last period.

- 6.2 Mr. Rob Warnes explained that the new timetable was introduced in May and has settled down well after a difficult first week. He highlighted the increase in passenger numbers relating to leisure travel, whilst the morning peak commute has not yet grown back. He also highlighted the strength in late afternoon travel and stated that this would need to be closely monitored in order to know where capacity delivery needs to focus in the future.

He informed Members that the rolling stock strategy is now be reviewed in light of the decarbonisation agenda. He explained that the vast majority of the fleet will be 35 -40 years old by the middle of the decade and are looking at the best ways of replacing these on a railway which hasn't been electrified.

- 6.3 Mr. Matthew Golton stated that there is now a new TPE contract in place which started on 30 May. He highlighted the current performance levels for the last month where performance was 94.8%. He explained that there are new performance targets which measure 'on time' calls at every station. He explained that a key focus for TPE is for the improvement of connectivity across the North of England and Scotland.
- 6.4 Mayor Jarvis raised the issues being experienced by East Midlands Railways and the impact this is having on other operators. He questioned what action is being taken by Rail North Partnership and TfN particularly in relation to rolling stock cascading to Northern as a result of this.
- 6.5 The Rail North Partnership Director explained that they are communicating and working with the East Midlands Market Lead however there are no dates in place when the cascade is likely to take place.
- 6.6 Cllr Hinchcliffe requested that TfN be involved and sighted on the train operators' business planning.
- Mr. Golton explained that it is the responsibility of the rail industry to take a long-term view and that this has to be rooted in the communities they serve.
- The Strategic Rail Director explained that the that the Rail North Committee will have an input in the business planning process at three stages. He further explained that as contracts end there will be work that can be done with operators to develop services and re-align resources.
- 6.7 Members raised the issue of Boxing Day Services and requested a report a report on 2022-23 options. The Rail North Partnership Director stated that he would get this information and circulate it to Members.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

7. Manchester Recovery Task force Update

- 7.1 The report of the Strategic Rail Director was received by Members. He then highlighted the key areas of the report and updated Members on progress.
- 7.2 Mr. Richard George stated that he is still trying to arrange meetings with a number of Members. He explained that the current position in putting a specification together for December 2022 is similar to the experiences of a few years ago where priorities need to be made about the services that are put on the Castlefield Corridor. He stated that there are no clever timetable fixes that can be done in order to give everyone what they want. He further stated that he will continue to have discussions to

decide the specification this needs to be done soon so that timetable planners can start their work.

- 7.3 Mayor Jarvis raised the issue of Sheffield not having link to airport and is keen to work together to find a resolution on this matter.
- 7.4 As Mayor Burnham had left the meeting the Chair highlighted a question that he had left in the chat bar in relation to serving the planned new station at Golborne and it being dependent on some electrification to Stalybridge. The Chair asked the Strategic Rail Director to pick up this issue with Mayor Burnham outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the report setting out the current position on services and infrastructure in and around Central Manchester including the discussion at the Transport for the North Board meeting on 9 June 2021 and the link to the anticipated Integrated Rail Plan.
- 2) That the Committee notes the actions taken by Transport for the North and the proposed next steps including a planned meeting of the Committee next month to consider the service changes for December 2022.

8. Business Planning and Commissioning

- 8.1 Members received the report from the Strategic Rail Director who explained that the report was for noting and endorsing.
- 8.2 The Strategic Rail Director and the Head of Investment planning highlighted the key areas of the report specifically the issues of stations, journey time improvements and reliability and resilience.
- 8.3 On behalf of Mayor Jarvis Ms. Melissa Farmer requested conformation that the line speed desktop study on the Hope Valley Line had been completed and enquired as to whether work could now progress on this to the next stage.

The Head of Investment Planning confirmed this to be correct and that TfN would now be commissioning Network Rail to validate the results. He anticipated that the results would be back in the autumn.

- 8.4 Cllr Hinchcliffe requested a list of the 13 locations. She also raised the issue of the economic case and should look at regeneration and not just speed and journey times.

The Head of Investment Planning explained that the TAME team are looking at the wider economic benefits. The Strategic Rail Director stated that this would be more the case with the stations.

- 8.5 The Chair stated that stations are generally under utilised and suggested that parts of stations could be rented out to businesses for a small rent. He also raised the issue of station accessibility and that the government is only funding work on ten stations throughout the North West.

With regards to the Stations Strategy the Chair raised the issues of tactile paving and level boarding

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee agree to the next stages in the workstreams described above, namely:
 - That Transport for the North's TAME team assess the potential for stations enhancements at all Category C to F stations in the North, in order to allocate them to one of the three potential routes to implementation;
 - That Transport for the North continues to apply for the inclusion of journey time improvement studies and schemes in the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline, and work with the Office of Road and Rail to alter Network Rail's licence; and
 - That Transport for the North supports Network Rail's Senior Sponsor in progressing the 13 priority reliability and resilience interventions.

- 2) That Members are also asked to note the need for greater funding to improve accessibility at rail stations in the North, noting that the rate of progress in Control Period 6 has been 3 stations per year in the North, and that this will not lead to satisfactory accessibility within an acceptable timescale. A report will be prepared for the TfN Board on the issue of accessibility at stations in July 2021, and it is intended that the Stations Strategy workstream will form a major part of rectifying the gap in this area.