
Meeting: Rail North Committee Consultation Call

Subject: Rail North Partnership operational update

Author: Gary Bogan, Rail North Partnership Director

Sponsor: David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director

Meeting Date: Wednesday 9 March 2022

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. Representatives from the operators and Network Rail will provide verbal updates and answer any questions at the meeting.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the information in the report.

3. Contract updates:

Northern Trains Ltd

- 3.1 After several weeks of challenging issues around late, short notice cancellations due to crew absences through covid, Northern (and other train operating companies) rolled out an omicron timetable on 4 January 2022, followed by a campaign to advise customers and stakeholders of the amended timetables.
- 3.2 In mid-February 2022 Northern began communicating to stakeholders that it would be extending its current timetable to May 22.
- 3.3 ASLEF (the drivers' trade union) formally withdrew their rest day working agreement on 16 January 2022 as a result of recording a 'failed to agree' for Covid-related arrangements, namely driver spares being allowed to work from home until they were needed for service delivery and the reintroduction of lateral flow testing for close contact. Northern also responded to RMT's letter that requested assurances around a number of issues relating to pay and conditions for its members.
- 3.4 The impact of omicron is visible across most performance indicators for the last period for which we have information (Rail Industry Period 10). Customer journeys and revenue both saw significant drops following a year of reasonably consistent growth up to Period 10. Customer satisfaction (CSAT) in the period was 51% against a target of 78% and net promoter score (NPS) was again negative at -1.9 due to the recent spike in traincrew-related cancellations. However, there is some indication that CSAT is bouncing back thanks to the certainty because of the revised timetable. There are also positive signs on demand and revenue – in the first week of February Northern carried 83,000 more passengers than the previous week, up to 1.34 million, while its revenue was up around 8%.
- 3.5 The results of Northern's annual stakeholder engagement survey showed an 11% increase in headline stakeholder engagement, with 92% of those surveyed saying that Northern builds strong stakeholder relationships – the highest ever result achieved. Also, the Institute of Customer Service recently ranked Northern the

'most improved' operator in the rail industry and the sixth-most-improved organisation in the UK from any sector.

TransPennine Express (TPE)

- 3.6 TPE continues to plan for May 22, December 22 and May 23 timetables against the background of uncertainty due to the deferral of the planned East Coast Mainline timetable changes at May 22.
- 3.7 Demand continues to recover with leisure markets strong and above pre-covid levels at the weekend, however the return to commuting patterns remains slow. TPE's customer volumes are at only two-thirds of pre-covid levels and recovery of those volumes has been further impaired due to the omicron variant.
- 3.8 Industrial relations (IR) issues with ASLEF and RMT, and the impact of the omicron variant on demand for travel, led to the introduction of a revised timetable from 10 January 2022 to ensure a resilient timetable for customers. That timetable has provided greater certainty but has been affected by local spikes in covid cases, which impact on traincrew resource.
- 3.9 RMT called a series of Sunday strikes over issues including pay for February and March, and this action has now been extended into June and will also cover some Saturdays and overtime working. For the first dates, TPE aimed to run 26% of a 'normal' Sunday timetable (around 50 of 200 services). RNP requires TPE to run a robust and reliable timetable, with a major focus on ensuring passenger communication is as extensive as possible. On these Sundays TPE made ticket acceptance arrangements, including with First Bus for local station calls in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area. For future action, TPE is looking to maintain its current Sunday service and is considering how to address other action.
- 3.10 Despite disruption from storms and engineering works, to date TPE has run a large majority of its planned strike-day services, carrying around 30,000 passengers each day (in addition to those travelling with other operators through ticket acceptance arrangements).
- 3.11 TPE is currently conducting its annual stakeholder survey, the results of which are due during March 2022. In February 2022 TPE won Train Operator of the Year, Rail Business of the Year and (for its public reassurance campaign as covid restrictions were eased) Marketing and Communications Excellence awards at the Rail Business Awards.

Other operators

Avanti/West Coast Main Line

Service increases

- 3.12 In response to falling demand and reduced resources as a result the omicron variant, a 4 train per hour (tph) timetable was introduced for January 2022 and February 2022, with 1tph Manchester and London via Macclesfield and Stoke-on-Trent and 4 four additional services each way throughout the day operating via Crewe and Wilmslow.
- 3.13 As Covid restrictions have eased and the impact of omicron has reduced, more people have been travelling, so Avanti West Coast has increased service levels in line with rising demand. From Friday 18 February 2022 to Friday 25 February 2022, a small increase was made to the number of morning and evening weekday services operated. Additional Friday services were also reintroduced in response to high demand on Fridays. From Monday 28 February 2022 Avanti West Coast moved to a 6tph timetable, with 2tph operating between Manchester and London.

This timetable is expected to remain in place until the national timetable change on Sunday 15 May 2022.

East Midlands Railway (EMR)

Timetables

- 3.14 EMR restored a substantial number of EMR Regional Sunday services (33 trains) and EMR Intercity weekday services (8 trains) on 27 February 2022. This increase leaves only 13 Sunday services still omitted from the timetable and takes EMR to 96% of its May 2021 timetable level of Sunday service across the network, while EMR Intercity weekday services are fully restored.
- 3.15 The timetable uplift is facilitated by EMR's formal resolution of its dispute with the RMT, which has affected numerous EMR Regional Sunday services. This resolves a 13-year Senior Conductor dispute.
- 3.16 EMR hopes to further step up its timetable in December 2022, although there is a national shortage of diesel rolling stock, which is particularly acute in the Midlands and the North. The late introduction of new trains on other parts of the network prevents a cascade of more Class 170s into EMR, which in turn prevents EMR releasing more of its legacy fleet types to Northern Trains to restore services in their own timetable.

Investment on the Barton-on-Humber Line

- 3.17 EMR is spending more than £400,000 upgrading and refreshing 12 stations along the Barton-on-Humber line.
- 3.18 The works, which aim to improve the overall station environment and travelling experience for customers, include the installation of passenger electronic help points and new and refreshed benches, signage and platform information, while metal fencing will be repainted, timber fences will be stained and brick shelters and columns will be painted.
- 3.19 EMR expects the work to be finished by late spring.

London North Eastern Railway (LNER)/East Coast Main Line

- 3.20 In preparation for beginning services to Reston in the Scottish Borders later this year, in February 2022 a 9-car Azuma from Edinburgh stopped at Reston, the first LNER train in 58 years. The train carried a specialist team which performed a series of safety checks (validation exercise), including checking the physical stepping distances between the train and platform for all 18 passenger doors and confirming access and sighting requirements have been satisfied from a customer, driver and onboard perspective.

CrossCountry

- 3.21 Since 27 November 2021 CrossCountry has had no Rest Day Working (RDW) agreement with ASLEF, so from 29 November has planned daily cancellations, including the 1427 Manchester Piccadilly – Bournemouth, 1927 Manchester Piccadilly – Southampton and 0714 Reading – Manchester Piccadilly. It has also been unable to operate its 7-car high speed trains HSTs on Scotland – Leeds – Birmingham – Plymouth, instead running 4 or 5-car Voyagers. Saturday has seen some part-cancellations with trains terminating at Newcastle rather than Edinburgh on some services. CrossCountry has arranged for customers' tickets will be accepted on other services.
- 3.22 CrossCountry saw passenger volumes dip again in December due to omicron but was able to avoid changes to its long-distance services timetable.

- 3.23 RMT train managers and senior conductors had planned strikes on 19 February and 5 March. These were called off on 18 February, and there is currently no further action planned.
- 3.24 From Monday 28 February CrossCountry is again operating the service level planned in response to the RDW situation; this level of planned cancellations will apply until there is a resolution to the RDW issue.
- 3.25 CrossCountry's latest passenger volumes figures (w/e 19 February) show average loadings on long-distance services is slowly recovering, to 60-70% of pre-covid volumes. Leisure travel remains dominant, with greater recovery in shorter-distance leisure and commuting markets, while longer-distance travel for both work and leisure is taking longer to recover, with daily commuting just below 50% and business travel at around 30% of pre-covid levels.
- 3.26 CrossCountry is working with DfT on its May 2022 timetable and strategic planning work for May 2023 and beyond timetable changes has begun. For May 2022 CrossCountry will restore some direct Manchester – Bristol services. It restored more calls at Chesterfield in the December 2021 timetable in response to stakeholder feedback.

4. Timetable updates

May 2022

- 4.1 As reported to the committee in December 2021, the plan for the May 2022 timetable change is to maintain recent high levels of overall performance, provide sufficient capacity to support passengers but remain responsive to changing passenger needs.

TPE May 2022 timetable adjustments

- 4.2 In the light of the ongoing pandemic, winter sickness and IR-induced training backlog and the ongoing loss of driver rest day working, TPE has considered the levels of service it can realistically provide at the May 2022 timetable change.
- 4.3 TPE achieved more than 12,000 days of driver training during calendar year 2021 and would like to deliver around 17,000 days of training in 2022 to support the December 2022 changes relating to the Manchester area and other timetable changes, to support TRU, to train new entrants and to successfully clear all the backlog of route and traction training.
- 4.4 TPE has been taking advantage of the reduced timetable introduced in January 2022 to undertake training in vacated train paths and has achieved a marked pick-up in training since January 2022.
- 4.5 Given the levels of absence (higher since covid), the withdrawal of rest day working by drivers and the ongoing industrial action by conductors, TPE has concluded that it needs to it will need to introduce some of the service reinstatements in its planned May 2022 timetable gradually.
- Liverpool-Glasgow: the current service is 2 southbound and 1.5 northbound. TPE proposes to expand this to 2.5 services in each direction (compared with a 'full service' of 3.5 services in each direction as previously envisaged);
 - On the South route, there will be a build-up to the full hourly service between Manchester and Cleethorpes. Trains will run hourly for most of the day, but 2 trains each day (in each direction) will not be reintroduced until later in the year to support the training programme;
 - Scarborough services will continue to operate as a shuttle, rather than being extended through to Manchester Victoria as previously envisaged; and

- The planned extension of the current Manchester Airport – Redcar Central service to Saltburn will now be introduced in two phases. At the May 2022 timetable change, the first TPE train of the day from and the last train of the day to Redcar Central will be extended to Saltburn. At the December 2022 timetable change the full hourly service to/from Saltburn will be introduced.

4.6 TPE will monitor its training programme outputs and seek to re-instate more services later in the year to match passenger demand/growth and in particular to support the holiday season.

4.7 TPE is also developing options for

- Extra York – Scarborough shuttles all week; and
- Extensions of some York – Scarborough shuttle services at weekends to Manchester.

TPE believes these adjustments to the May timetable will support service resilience and improve its ability to implement key service changes. It is aiming to complete training and restore full service as soon as possible. RNP will monitor the situation and ensure full scheduled service is returned as soon as possible.

December 2022

4.8 Focus on December 2022 is planned for the introduction of the Manchester Recovery Task Force (MRTF) timetable. There is a report on this meeting's agenda on MRTF and progress on December 2022.

May 2023

4.9 The current planning assumption for the May 2023 timetable change is the implementation of a new East Coast Mainline timetable. Significant work is being undertaken to review the feedback received from the consultation and the operational readiness to deliver an improved, achievable new timetable that responds to the feedback. Further details will be provided to the committee once the industry as a revised proposal.

5. TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU)

5.1 Following the first major blockade of the TRU programme in July/August 2021, operators continued to work collaboratively to deliver good customer experience.

5.2 The operators and Network Rail take a 'plan-do-review' approach to each disruption, and these earlier 'lighter' disruptions are proving invaluable in evolving and developing their customer handling plans in preparing for more significant disruptions.

5.3 No major blockades are planned for 2022; most TRU disruption is focussed around weekends between April 2022 and September 2022. Operators will continue to work collaboratively to efficiently deploy customer delivery managers (a shared cross-industry resource) and use relevant customer plan to maintain the best customer experience.

6. Performance

6.1 The graphs below highlight the train performance for Northern and TPE.

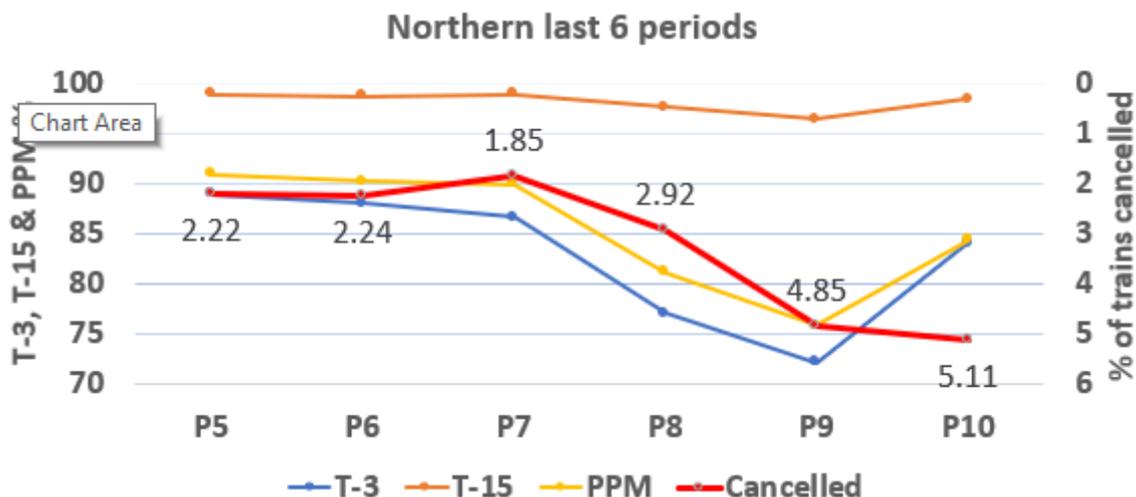
The data is reported under the new performance metrics:

- T-3 (arriving within 3 minutes);
- T-15 (arriving within 15 minutes); and
- Cancellations (% of trains cancelled without prior notice v scheduled to run).

6.2 Although public performance measure (PPM) is no longer a reporting metric, it has been included as a visual guide (data for PPM is extracted from the Office of Rail and Road webpages).

6.3 Metric targets are seasonal and from P7 and are therefore lower due to seasonal effects of autumn and winter. Consequently, dips in performance are expected during this period, especially P8 and P9.

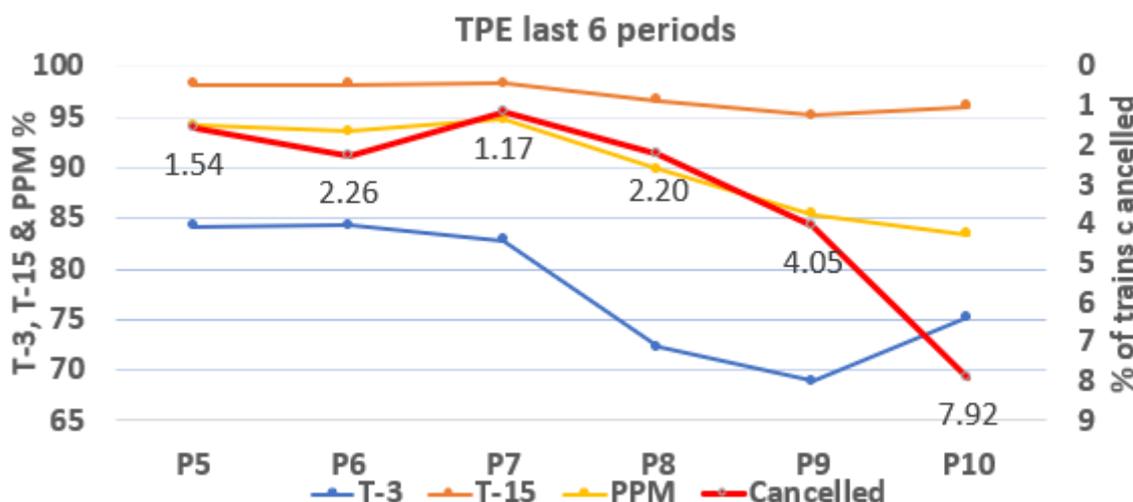
6.4 **Northern**



Performance remained stable until the end of P7.

The proportion of trains running to T-15 has remained high throughout the last 6 periods - in the high 90s%. T-3 dipped significantly since P7 due to autumn leaf fall and several severe weather instances but bounced back in P10 to mid-80% region. While PPM is no longer an official measure, analysis shows that the PPM tracked T-3 and currently sits mid-80%. The percentage of trains cancelled also tracked T-3 because of autumn and severe weather and has remained at just over 5% at the end of P10.

6.5 **TPE**



6.6 TPE performance was stable until the end of P7.

- 6.7 T-15 has remained consistently high throughout the past 6 periods. T-3 shows a significant downward trend from end of P7. PPM follows the same trend and cancellations increased significantly to a peak of 7.92% at the end of P10.
- 6.8 The main reason for the downward trend of T-3 and PPM is autumn leaf fall and severe weather. Cancellations suffered through autumn leaf fall and severe weather up to P9 and spiked in P10 due to driver rest day working agreement ending.
- 6.9 At the last meeting, Rail North Partnership agreed to routine reporting of service quality information. This will be included in future updates as it becomes available.

7. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct finance implications as a result of this report.

Resource Implications

- 7.2 There are no direct resourcing implications as a result of this report.

Legal Implications

- 7.3 There are no apparent legal implications arising as a result of this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 7.4 The impact on TfN's objectives in particular risk (TCR09: The long-term effect of Covid-19 on the viability of train services and future investment decisions)

Environmental Implications

- 7.5 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.

Equality and Diversity

- 7.6 No implications

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used

Please include any technical abbreviations and acronyms used in the report in this section. (Please see examples below.) This will provide an easy reference point for the reader for any abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report.

- a) TRU - Transpennine Route Upgrade
- b) TfN - Transport for the North
- c) TPE - TransPennine Express
- d) RNP - Rail North Partnership