

Meeting: Rail North Committee Consultation Call
Subject: Rail North Partnership Operational Update
Author: Gary Bogan, Rail North Partnership Director
Sponsor: Darren Oldham, Rail and Roads Director
Meeting Date: Wednesday 22 February 2023

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To update the Committee on operational rail matters, including performance, and to ask Members to note the information in the report. Representatives from Northern Trains, TransPennine Express (TPE) and Network Rail will attend the meeting.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the information in the report and the actions that Transport for the North and Rail North Partnership (RNP) are taking to ensure operators have robust recovery plans in place and to provide them with support and guidance to respond to current issues in the best way possible for passengers.
- 2.2 It is recommended that Committee members discuss the current issues with representatives of the industry attending the meeting.

3. Overview

- 3.1 Train operations in the North (and elsewhere) continue to be impacted by industry-wide issues including Industrial Relations (including ongoing and potential future strikes), higher than average levels of sickness and training backlogs caused by Covid. These issues are combining to create a very challenging environment for operators and unacceptable levels of performance and disruption for passengers. For performance to improve to sustainable levels, the training backlog must be addressed and this needs to be managed alongside the ongoing impact of industrial action, sickness and the loss of rostering flexibility previously afforded by driver Rest Day Working (RDW) is having on daily performance through full or part cancellations.
- 3.2 In the North of England further strikes took place on 1 and 3 February 2023, following a period of disruption in late December.
- 3.3 Transport for the North is using its role and influence in the Rail North Partnership (RNP) to seek solutions to the underlying issues as well as short-term mitigations. RNP is using its contractual relationship with Northern and TPE to develop appropriate recovery plans, implement them once approved and hold the operators to account for delivery against them.
- 3.4 In November 2022 the Secretary of State met Northern mayors and TfN to discuss the impacts of ongoing poor performance. Following these meetings, DfT agreed a revised RDW mandate for TPE and Northern.
- 3.5 On 19 January the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) wrote to all train operators informing them of its decision "to stop the use of "P*-coded" pre-cancellations caused by late-notice resource availability shortages." All operators and Network Rail will work together to identify and implement an appropriate method to end the use of late-notice, resource availability shortage "P*coded" pre-cancellations. In the meantime, cancellations must remain visible to passengers and must also

form a part of the industry dataset to inform decision making, and operators must provide ORR with data counting this type of resource-driven “p*-coded” pre-cancellation at the end of each railway period.

4. TransPennine Express and Northern Recovery Plans

- 4.1 Against a backdrop of stronger recovery of passenger demand in the North, performance remains unacceptable and below target levels (see Appendix 1), due to the impact of sickness, training, industrial action and the loss of driver RDW flexibility. A new offer of a Rest Day Working Agreement was made to ASLEF in late November, but the offer was turned down without resorting to driver ballot. The offer remains on the table for ASLEF to consider.
- 4.2 RNP has been working with Transport for the North, TPE and Northern to develop robust recovery plans, implement them and hold the operators to account for delivery against them. RNP is working with operators to transform ways of working to provide a sustainable and responsive foundation for growing back reliably and making sure operators have the resources, including through large-scale recruitment, to run intended services reliably and increase services as resources allow.
- 4.3 Following a period of worsening performance in the run up to Christmas 2022, the Secretary of State has increased focus on TPE with the Rail Minister, Huw Merriman, now holding weekly meetings with RNP to keep abreast of the position. A formal request for a Recovery Plan has been made, and TPE has now submitted this to RNP board and ministers. TPE will be in attendance and will provide members with an overview of the main actions. The Secretary of State will decide whether to accept TPE’s Recovery Plan as deliverable and desirable or will look to take alternative action, including consideration of appointing the Operator of Last Resort.
- 4.4 RNP continues to work with DOHL (the holding company for the Operator of Last Resort), Transport for the North, DfT and the operators to develop plans, originally put forward by Northern, for a Rail Academy for the North – a multi-location training academy for our (and potentially other) operators, which will both offer people across the North the opportunity to develop the skills needed for careers in rail and provide operators with a sustainable supply of skilled staff for future growth.
- 4.5 Transport for the North has continued to meet with DfT and operators to push for greater clarity on future plans and certainty for passengers where services are disrupted.
- 4.6 RNP has additionally approved TPE’s recruitment of additional driver trainees this year, building on its already significant pipeline of trainees.
- 4.7 Operators’ recovery will be measured by constant monitoring of performance across the network to see if timetable adjustments are supporting service stabilisation, monitoring of sickness levels to see if trends are improving or degrading, reporting of recruitment plans and levels of recruitment and driver training progress, through performance dashboards.
- 4.8 As part of the Recovery Plan (see 4.3 above), RNP is carrying out a review of South and North TransPennine route timetables with TPE to establish what improvements can reliably be made for the December 2023 timetable, including restoring WCML services.
- 4.9 The number of drivers who will complete training and be available for services will increase by 46 between now and 28 May 2023. This increase, coupled with the

return to work of a small number of short- and long-term sick drivers, will reduce the reliance on RDW and should lead to fewer cancellations.

TransPennine Express

- 4.10 Throughout the year, TPE has seen ongoing high levels of sickness, greater than anticipated levels of drivers leaving the business and a very substantial volume of driver training required to recover from Covid-related competency loss and to meet the demands of enhancement programmes (principally TRU and Manchester Task Force related) and timetable changes.
- 4.11 This has impacted service performance, with the situation compounded by diminished rostering flexibility from the loss of driver RDW since December 2021 and strike action by each of ASLEF, TSSA and RMT which has impacted the rate at which training can be delivered.
- 4.12 RNP has been working with the operator and stakeholders to resolve the underlying issues and improve the service for passengers including flexibility to facilitate a temporary Rest Day Working Agreement. A revised offer for RDW was made to ASLEF in November, although this was rejected.
- 4.13 As a temporary solution, and subject to strict conditions, TPE introduced a revised timetable from mid-September 2022 for services it operates on the West Coast Main Line. The amended timetable made reductions in services back to a similar level provided pre-May 2022, complemented by additional bus services in Cumbria and the Scottish Borders. Four services on this route were reinstated in the December 2022 timetable.
- 4.14 There continues to be a focus on the provision of accurate and timely information to passengers about cancellations and service disruption.
- 4.15 TPE will continue to work with Transport for the North members and stakeholders to understand the impact of the timetable in practice and consider any improvements or enhancements to better align the passenger offer with passengers' particular requirements or experiences.
- 4.16 TPE will continue to work with RNP, Transport for the North and DfT to monitor and report on its recovery plan, once delivered and if agreed, to address the underlying issues which have affected operational performance for the last year.
- 4.17 Following a number of uplifts in its December timetable, TPE is not planning material timetable changes at May 2023. RNP is continuing to discuss options for December 2023 with TPE as part of the business planning process and TPE's recovery plan.
- 4.18 Looking forward, TPE continues to make headway with its significant driver training programme and is recruiting additional driver trainees.

Northern Trains Ltd.

December 2022 timetable

- 4.19 The Avoidance of Dispute in relation to the May 2022 Timetable introduction within West and Central was resolved with ASLEF during Period 7. This brought an end to the rostering dispute and part of the agreement reached gave assurances around the December 2022 Timetable by committing to an increased but capped percentage of spare turns, which in turn provides a greater level of protection to the delivery of the train plan. Traincrew linking was completed on time for the December 2022 Timetable change for the entire business and for the first time in several years, there were no incidence of 'emergency rostering'.
- 4.20 The start of the December 2022 saw a number of operational challenges. Period 10 saw RMT strikes on the 13,14,16,17 December 2022 and 3,4,6,7 January 2023 as well as an ASLEF strike on the 5 January 2023 and Network Rail strikes on the 24-27 December 2022. Period 10 also saw RMT work to rule from the 18

December 2022 to the 2 January 2023. Throughout this period passengers were advised to check before they travel. This is because the overtime ban by the RMT meant that Northern had to make interventions 72 hours in advance where resourcing levels were not sufficient to run the published train plan. This led to high level of services not operating during that period.

- 4.21 Owing to a lack of staff cover during the overtime ban period, Sunderland station was closed on 18 and 19 December 2022. Following RNP intervention and RNP's request that NTL prioritise staffing, the station was able to be re-opened through the rest of the holiday period. Sunderland Station also has an issue during the station redevelopment works which caused a station closure due to health and safety risks.

Performance

- 4.22 Traincrew-related incidents continue to be the primary cause of incidents. Whilst 2978 services were removed from the train plan through P-coding to mitigate the impact, the continued high level of cancellations means challenges for service recovery following incidents, irrespective of causation. Sheffield driver, Blackpool, Blackburn and Manchester Victoria conductor depots made up 30% of the overall traincrew cancellations. A Performance Action Plan is now in place to work towards addressing these issues, however unless absence levels reduce to levels experienced pre-covid this is likely to remain a challenge until 2024.
- 4.23 Northern continues to face challenges due to other operators not running services. While the operator is working to manage the impacts of other operators' delays/cancellations, these are causing impacts on performance for which Northern is not to blame.

Successes

- 4.24 Northern has been shortlisted at the Northern Power Women Awards in the large business category.

5. Other Updates

Cross Country Trains

- 5.1 Over the last three months CrossCountry have faced challenges with performance, particularly around the Christmas period where passenger journeys have been impacted by infrastructure failures, application of weather-related Emergency Speed Restrictions and industrial action related driver shortages.
- 5.2 CrossCountry's priority has been to continue positive engagement with industry partners to maintain performance by working closely on projects to tackle trespass, fatality prevention and supporting education for young people.
- 5.3 During the coming weeks CrossCountry will be hosting a series of briefings to advise on changes for the May 2023 timetable change.
- 5.4 CrossCountry have recently received approval from the Department for Transport for a Customer and Communities Investment fund project in the region and, with the support from the Community Rail Education Network, launched the UK's Sustainable Travel Educational Toolkit.

Avanti West Coast

- 5.5 In line with its recovery plan, from 11 December 2022 Avanti has put in place a timetable structure, traincrew rosters and availability management strategies designed to deliver an improved, and more reliable train service. This increased services from four trains per hour to seven trains per hour and included restoring a 3tph service pattern between Manchester and London.
- 5.6 All major routes now have more services than before the August 2022 timetable step-down. Successful delivery of the new timetable has been restricted by strike

action and, on non-strike days, bad weather and engineering works. Delivering the full benefit of the new timetable is dependent on stable industrial relations.

- 5.7 The Department will review the elements within the control of Avanti which impacted their operational performance over the term of the Emergency Measures contract, as one of the important factors when considering the contractual arrangements for train services on the WCML beyond 1 April 2023. Officials continue to meet Avanti's senior management weekly to review their progress against the recovery plan and handling of risks and will continue to hold Avanti responsible for matters within its control.

LNER (London North Eastern Railway)

- 5.8 On 1 January 2023, LNER celebrated the centenary of the grouping following the Railway Act of 1921.
- 5.9 New Year's Day marked the start of a year full of celebrations for LNER who will spend 2023 recognising the achievements of the past as well as the potential for the future. LNER's commemorative video is at <https://youtu.be/8W2CE6ZwwQ4>
- 5.10 On Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 January, LNER responded to the collapse of UK based airline Flybe with free travel for stranded Flybe staff and customers along the East Coast route.
- 5.11 Customers who had seen their flights cancelled, could travel of any LNER service to their destination for free, by presenting their cancelled airline ticket.
- 5.12 LNER's Tomorrow's Talent online work experience programme is returning for a fourth time.
- 5.13 Tomorrow's Talent showcases the wide variety of career opportunities available in the rail industry with teenagers completing several online modules on topics such as the increasing use of innovative technology and sustainability.
- 5.14 Since 2021, more than 500 teenagers living within ten miles of the LNER route have taken part in the programme.
- 5.15 LNER has launched 'Deal Finder' to offer customers even greater choice and flexibility when it comes to planning their trips.
- 5.16 It offers customers the opportunity to set their own budget and see a list of destinations available to them with the lowest available fares shown.

First Hull Trains

- 5.17 Hull Trains have continued to see positive passenger numbers, with the launch of new products such as it's 'Long Weekender' ticket designed to move passengers onto less busy services around weekends. They have also begun to trial 10 carriage formations on additional services over the past couple of months, to increase capacity and assess demand, making more use of the trains that they have.
- 5.18 Performance issues under the ownership of Network Rail have caused over 70% of the delays to customers using Hull Trains service. Hull Trains units remain the best in class in terms of performance for any hybrid train on the UK rail network, demonstrating the strong partnership working between them and their train maintainer, Hitachi. In fact, they won 'best in class' at the recent Golden Spanner awards, recognising the service delivery and reliability of their trains.
- 5.19 Looking forward, they are also one of the few operators on the East Coast Mainline maintaining links to London when the line is closed at weekends, using the Midland Mainline and London St Pancras to keep passengers moving. Furthermore, they are looking to partner with sister operator, Lumo, during some future engineering works so that path requirements are minimalised, but passengers can still travel successfully.

Lumo

- 5.20 Lumo has seen strong passenger demand over the last quarter, with increased leisure demand for whole route journeys between Edinburgh and London. Their service has provided significant competition to the airlines along the route. Recent findings show that travelling on Lumo is over 40 times greener than flying between London and Edinburgh. In November, they carried their one millionth passenger, having run over 2,500 services – the equivalent to around 5,500 full flights, and taking almost 93,000 tons of CO2 out of the sky.
- 5.21 Recent performance has been somewhat mixed, with infrastructure issues under the responsibility of Network Rail causing almost 60% of delays and cancellations to their services in recent periods. The geographical nature and length of route heightens the likelihood of a delay impacting Lumo services compared to other operators. Recent improvement works around Newcastle and York stations should also help to reduce some of these infrastructure issues. Whilst there have been some minor fleet faults with their trains, they have delivered best in class periodic performance for the fleet type compared to all other operators using the same fully electric train. Work is also underway to provide a more regular service during engineering works, so that links to both capital cities can be maintained.

6. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Resource Implications

- 6.2 There are no direct resourcing implications to Transport for the North arising from this report.

Legal Implications

- 6.3 There are no apparent legal implications arising from this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 6.4 Transport for the North have two relevant corporate risks which are being actively managed - 309 'viability of future train services and future investment decisions' and 311 'future timetables'.

Environmental Implications

- 6.5 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. Passenger rail has an essential part to play in achieving our decarbonisation objectives within Transport for the North's Decarbonisation Strategy, particularly around reducing private car vehicle mileage.

Equality and Diversity

- 6.6 There are no equality or diversity issues arising from the report.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix 1. Performance Update

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used

a) RNP	Rail North Partnership
b) TPE	TransPennine Express
c) TRU	Transpennine Route Upgrade
d) NTL	Northern Trains Ltd
e) NPS	Transport Focus National Passenger Survey
f) CSAT	Customer Satisfaction Survey
g) RMT	National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
h) ASLEF	The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
i) TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
j) ORR	Office of Rail and Road

Appendix 1.

Performance update

The charts below highlight the train performance for both Northern and TransPennine Express.

The data is reported under the new performance metrics:

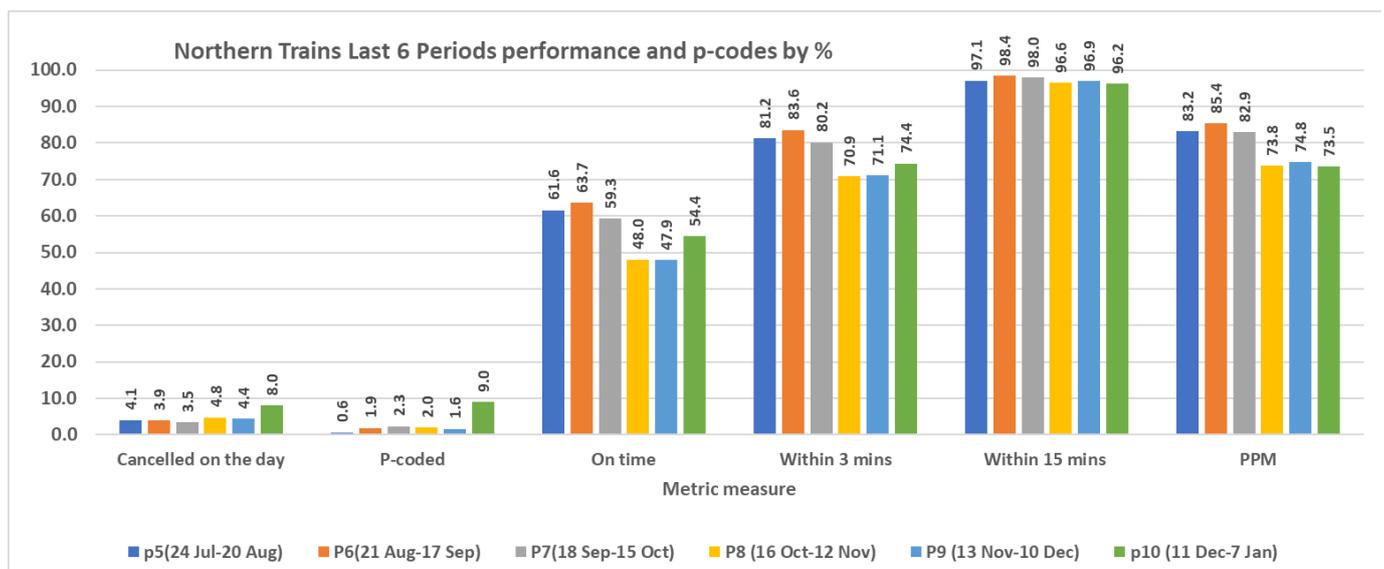
- On-time (arriving within 59 seconds)
- T-3 (arriving within 3 minutes)
- T-15 (arriving within 15 minutes)
- Cancellations (% of trains cancelled v planned to run)

TPE and Northern continue to reduce train services through implementing planned service reductions before 22.00 hours the previous day and these services do not reflect in the overall performance of cancellations but are referenced in the performance charts below as a percentage of trains p-coded.

Although Public Performance Measure (PPM) is no longer a reporting metric but is a combination of all metrics, it has been included as a visual guide (data for PPM is extracted from the Office of Rail and Road webpages).

Periods are calculated each 4 weeks and period dates are included in the charts.

Northern

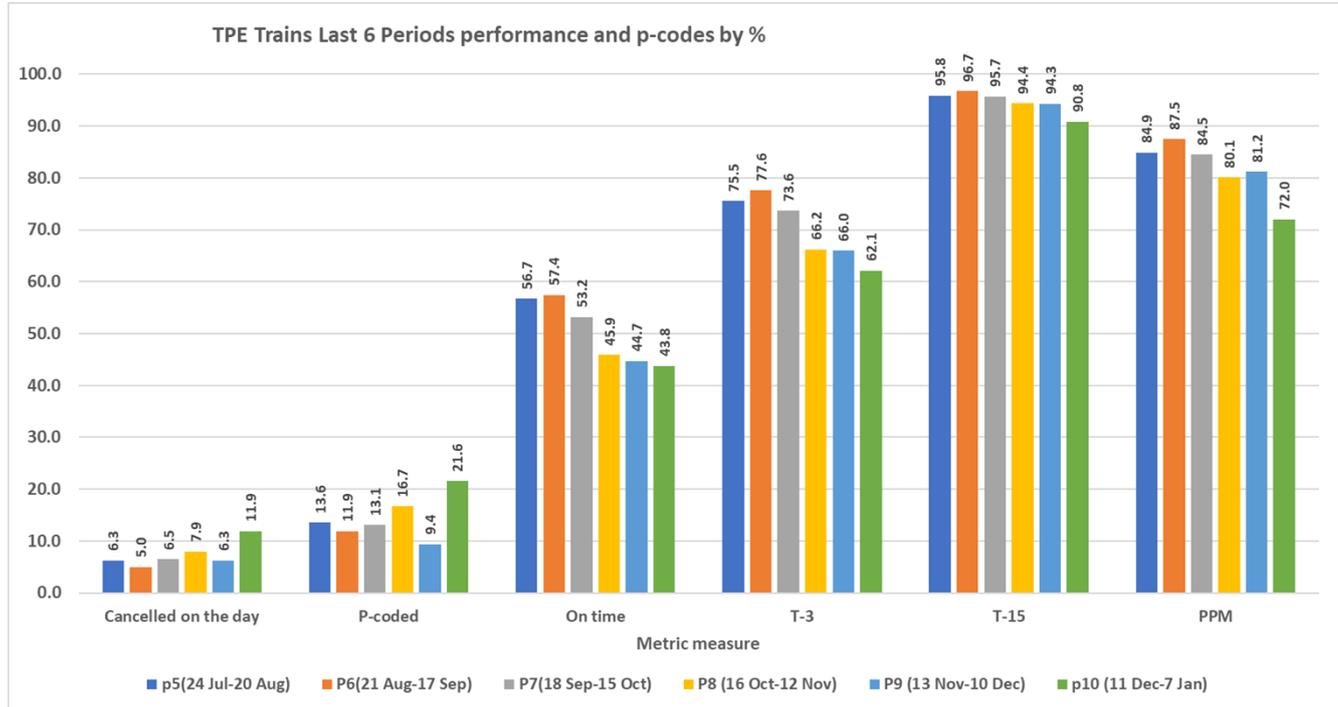


Performance has declined for all metrics compared to P5, P6 & P7. T-15 remains consistently in the high 90%. Cancellations has increased to 8% during P10 which is mostly contributed to action short of strike over a 3-week period.

P-coded trains peaked at 9% in period 10 which is mostly contributed to action short of strike over a 3-week period.

Although PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that since P7 PPM has dipped to low 70's% and now sits at 73.5%.

TPE



TransPennine Express performance has declined for all metrics since to P6. Notably cancellations on the day have increased to 11.9% during P10 which is mostly contributed to action short of strike over a 3-week period.

P-coded services peaked at 21.6% in period 10 which is mostly contributed to action short of strike over a 3-week period.

Although PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that since P6 PPM has significantly declined and sits at 72% for P10.