
Meeting: Rail North Committee
Subject: Rail North Partnership Operational Update
Author: Gary Bogan, Rail North Partnership Director
Sponsor: Darren Oldham, Rail and Road Director
Meeting Date: Wednesday 7 June 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.
- 1.2 Representatives from Northern Trains, TransPennine Trains (TPT) and the government's Operator of Last Resort 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.
- 2.2 It is recommended that Committee members discuss the current issues with representatives of the industry attending the meeting.

3. Overview:

- 3.1 A summary of performance for the last 6 months for TPE and Northern is included as Appendix 1. Performance continues 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.
- 3.2 As discussed at previous meetings, 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).
- 3.3 In the North of England further strikes took place on 1 and 3 February 2023, 12, 13 and 31 May 2023, 2 and 3 June 2023.
- 3.4 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 TPT to ensure there are appropriate recovery plans in place and hold the operators to account for delivery against them.
- 3.5 Despite these challenges, there continues to be strong growth in the north, particularly in the leisure markets. The three Network Rail major stations, Manchester Piccadilly, Leeds and Liverpool Lime Street have seen weekend recovery in the leisure market exceed demand seen in 2019 (pre-covid). Weekday recovery remains suppressed, especially Mondays. The recovery across the combined three Network Rail managed stations in the north is well ahead of the combined Network Rail managed stations in London for both weekdays and weekends. Members will be provided with an update on Northern's approach to growing the railway and developing new products and promotions to attract more customers as the market changes.

4. TransPennine Express

- 4.1 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 and timetable changes. The Secretary of State decided that TPE should be transferred to the Operator of Last Resort (OLR) having decided that, despite TPE's efforts to sort out the underlying problems, a reset is required to deliver the step change required. The formal announcement was made on 11 May 2023, since when the focus was to ensure as smooth a handover as possible. The new operator is called TransPennine Trains Limited (TPT).
- 4.2 Earlier in the year, TPE introduced a formal performance recovery plan aimed at reducing pre-planned and on the day cancellations. The recovery plan is closely monitored for progress. Recent monitoring has seen the plan meeting the baseline trajectory. Planned and on the day cancellations have seen a very positive decline since December 2022. However, the most recent data has seen an increase in cancellations and performance remains broadly in line with the same period 12 months ago.
- 4.3 Securing a Rest Day Working agreement with drivers remains the best way of accelerating the recovery plan. A revised offer was accepted by ASLEF, but, in the light of further local disputes, action short of a strike was implemented thereby ruling out work rest days and overtime work. A verbal update on progress will be provided at the meeting.
- 4.4 The announcement that TPE was moving to OLR included reference to a review of services across the north:
- "The Transport Secretary has asked the Department for Transport to review services in the north to help drive efficiency and find better ways to deliver for passengers across the region. He also asks all interested parties including the northern mayors and Transport for the North to engage with the government on this work".*
- Transport for the North expects to work closely with those undertaking the review to ensure local priorities and evidence and fully reflected in any options developed.
- 4.5 Richard George, Chair of DOHL (the Operator of Last resort) will attend the meeting to provide a verbal update on the transfer of the business, the recovery and plans for the review.
- 4.6 Following a number of uplifts in its December 2022 timetable, TPE did not make any material timetable changes at May 2023. RNP will continue to discuss options for December 2023 with TPT as part of the business planning process and TPE's recovery plan.

5. Northern Trains

- 5.1 The new timetable commenced on Sunday 21 May 2023, with Northern services staying broadly the same, with only a handful of exceptions: the introduction of an additional semi-fast between Middleborough and Newcastle; a new weekday Sheffield-Cleethorpes daily service (replacing the Saturday-only service); a new Leeds-Chester via Manchester Victoria service on Sundays to support additional Calder Valley capacity during Transpennine Route Upgrade works; and a number of other minor alterations. A proposed change of operator for services between Huddersfield and Castleford was not able to take place, and therefore a replacement bus will continue to operate. In working with RNP to develop the timetable, Northern has worked to make sure its planning supports long-term value for a sustainable future, given industry cost challenges. The central focus

has been on resilience, prioritising as reliable a service as possible for passengers.

- 5.2 Appendix 1 indicates that Northern's operational performance continues to be below target in some areas. Traincrew-related incidents continue to be the primary cause of cancellations. 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. A Performance Action Plan is in place to work towards addressing these issues. However, a radical improvement is dependent on the resolution of wider environmental pressures, and this will remain a challenge until at least 2024, given the parallel training challenge.
- 5.3 Transport for the North, DfT and RNP are working with Northern on their Performance Improvement Plan. This plan will examine specific key KPIs which have been contributing to underperformance on certain elements most notably self-caused train cancellations and provide targeted mitigation plans for specific issues in order to deliver sustained good performance and more certainty for passengers where services are disrupted.
- 5.4 The Secretary of State has confirmed funding for the full Northumberland Line scheme and Northern and Rail North Partnership continue to work with Network Rail and Transport for the North partners in the North East to launch services on this line in summer 2024. Northern have recommenced their early years recruitment programme. Adverts for the roles are currently live, ready for a September 2023 start.

Rail Academy/Skills for Rail Project

- 5.5 RNP has held discussions with partner skills leads, train operators and colleges to identify how a comprehensive skills programme for careers in rail can be developed and delivered.
- 5.6 The first stage of the potential programme, a rail-focussed basic skills package that would be delivered by local authorities as part of their skills remit, would also aim to reach out to communities and groups that currently do not consider a career in rail, to increase the diversity of the workforce and promote rail as an attractive career.
- 5.7 The second stage of the programme would see colleges and other facilities in a hub-and-spoke configuration delivering classroom-based (including virtual reality and simulators) training. The programme currently is not predicated on building new facilities. The third and final stage of the programme is in-train route and traction knowledge development, which will be delivered by the employing operator.
- 5.8 Following the move of TPE into OLR, RNP is now discussing with DOHL how the programme, which was originally put forward by Northern, might be extended to include its other operators.

6. Other operators

Avanti West Coast

- 6.1 Avanti West Coast (AWC) has made significant performance improvements since its December 2022 timetable uplift.
- 6.2 AWC has increased the number of services by more than 40%, including restoring three trains per hour on the Manchester route.
- 6.3 Reliability has improved significantly, for the last few months cancellations AWC is responsible for reduced to below 1.5%, and more than 93% of all trains arrived within 15 minutes of their planned time.

- 6.4 Weekday tickets are available 12 weeks in advance, and weekend 8 weeks.
- 6.5 AWC is halfway through its £117m Pendolino refurbishment and is preparing for the introduction of a new £350m fleet of electric and bi-mode Hitachi trains.
- 6.6 Despite strikes, AWC supported the Eurovision Song Contest, on the Sunday helping more than 6,000 passengers travel from Liverpool.
- 6.7 AWC has introduced Travel Companion, a dedicated Whatsapp channel providing real-time support to disabled passengers, and Superfare, which enables travellers who are flexible around travel times to access a great range of discounted fares (one-way London to Liverpool £15; Manchester £20).

Cross Country Trains

- 6.8 Over the last three months CrossCountry have enjoyed a particularly strong start to the year with performance and limited cancellations: the only limitations has been challenging service management on the LNE route, but working groups are being formed to work on an improvement strategy.
- 6.9 During the coming weeks CrossCountry will be operating a staged introduction to the May 2023 timetable uplift with additional services between Reading and Newcastle starting from Monday 12 June 2023.
- 6.10 CrossCountry have been working with Network Rail on a series of events to promote rail safety to students throughout the region: alongside the British Transport Police, they are aiming to reduce trespass and anti-social behaviour in hot spot areas.

East Midlands Railway

- 6.11 Sunday 21 May 2023 saw changes to East Midlands Railway's (EMR) timetable. The new timetable sees a number of improvements on EMR's Regional routes, including off-peak Matlock to Nottingham through services, additional services between Leicester and Lincoln, and two trains per hour on the Robin Hood Line on a Saturday.
- 6.12 As part of the timetable change, EMR's Class 180 fleet will be removed from service in line with the current lease agreement end date. The Class 156s will also leave the EMR fleet at this time. Therefore, some formation changes will be made to services, though EMR will continue to safeguard the most popular trains in line with customer demand as much as possible.

Lumo

- 6.13 Lumo continues to see strong passenger growth across the route that it operates, with route performance improved slightly since the last update. Performance issues have been driven by a range of factors, notably external factors such as trespass and animal incursions, as well as more general infrastructure faults.
- 6.14 Lumo's trains remain the most reliable train fleet in its class, with strong partnership working with maintainer Hitachi. The company is also continuing to promote its green credentials compared to similar air journeys, with a report to be released shortly showing the direct comparison on carbon emissions.
- 6.15 The company has gained approval from the Office of Rail and Road to operate 10 carriage trains, with trials commencing shortly.

Hull Trains

- 6.16 Hull Trains has now seen passenger numbers exceed pre-pandemic figures, following a concerted effort to develop the service and respond to the post pandemic passenger travel behaviours. Hull Trains was the only rail company in the 2022/23 financial year to be running at 102% of pre-Covid volumes.

- 6.17 Performance has been affected by a range of external factors, notably trespass, cable theft and animal incursions, as well as infrastructure faults such as broken rails and overhead line issues. The train fleet continues to be class-leading in terms of reliability and miles per casualty.
- 6.18 Work has commenced on a £1.2m investment to improve Howden station platform accessibility, with an innovative system being installed to raise the platform level. This will benefit all passengers and rail operators and includes the installation of tactile paving surfaces. The project is due for completion in early July 2023. Hull Trains is also considering a number of other investment projects as part of its infrastructure investment fund.

7. Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications to TfN arising from this report.

Resource Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 7.4 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

- 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 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive and therefore does not stimulate the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment (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

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

8. Appendices

- 8.1 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.	NLT	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
h.	TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
i.	OLR	Operator of Last Resort

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j.	ORR	Office of Rail and Road
j.	TPT	TransPennine Trains Ltd
k.	DOHL	Department for Transport OLR Holdings Ltd

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)
- P*-codes (% of trains pre-planned cancellation)

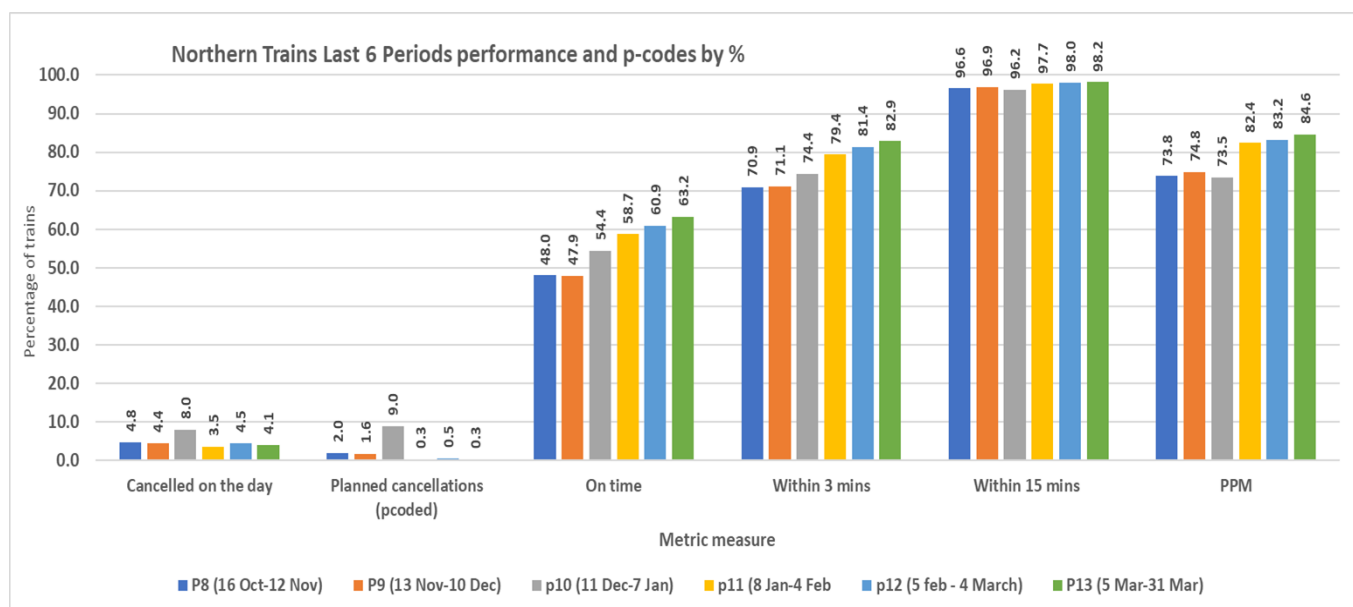
TPE continue to reduce train services through implementing planned service reductions before 22.00 hours the previous day and these services do not reflect in the overall performance of cancellations but are referenced in the performance charts below as a percentage of trains p coded.

Northern P*-coded trains have significantly reduced over the past 3 periods.

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.

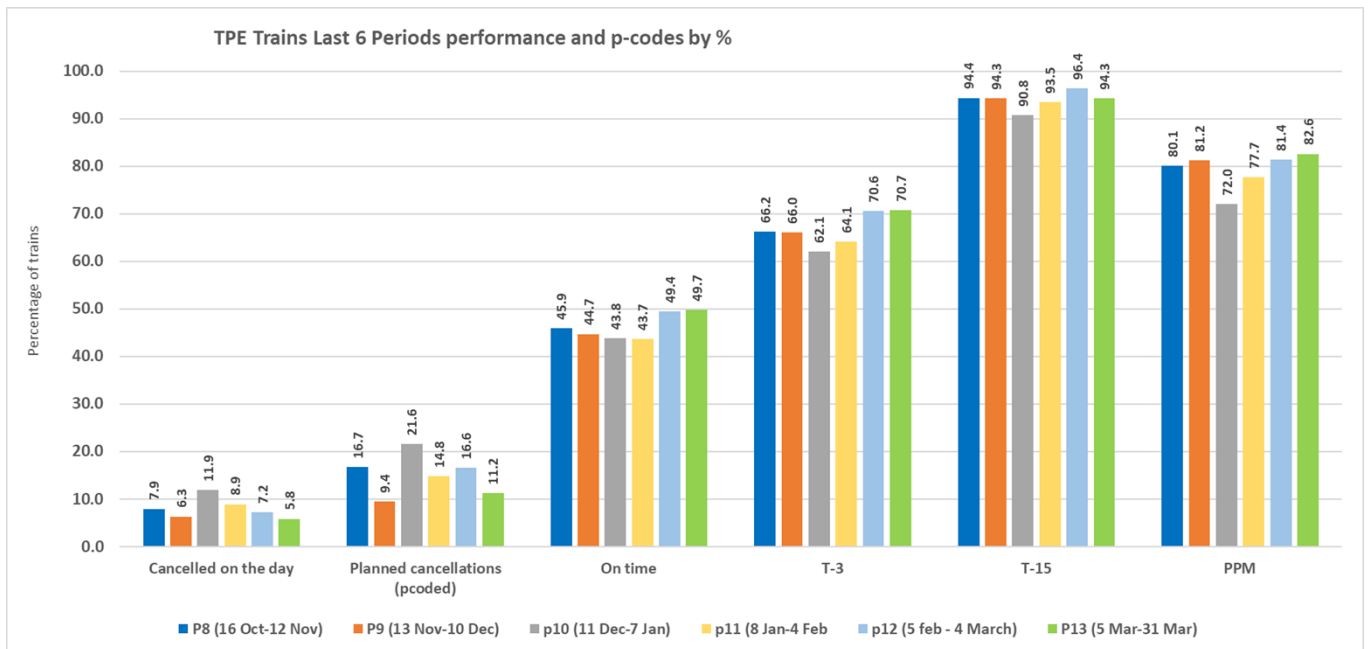
Northern



Performance across all metrics has improved since period 10. Planned cancellations (p*-codes) have reduced significantly since period 10.

Although PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that PPM is at its best level over the past 6 Periods.

TPE



Transpennine Express performance has seen an improvement across all metrics since period 10. since period 10. Cancellations on the day and is at the lowest level for the last six periods.

P*-coded services peaked at 21.6% in period 10 but since has reduced to 11.2% in period 13.

Although PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that PPM is at its best level over the past 6 Period.