

Rail North Committee Minutes

7 June 2023
The Queens Hotel, Leeds

Present:

Mayor Andy Burnham (Greater Manchester Combined Authority) (Chair)

Attendee	Local Authority
Mayor Steve Rotheram	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Cllr Rupert Swarbrick	Lancashire
Mayor Jamie Driscoll	North East
Cllr Martin Gannon	North East
Mayor Oliver Coppard	South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority;
Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
Mayor Tracy Brabin	West Yorkshire Combined Authority;

Partners in Attendance:

Nick Donovan	Northern
Richard George	OLR Holdings
Chris Jackson	TransPennine
Graham Meiklejohn	TransPennine

Officers in Attendance:

Name	Job Title
Lord McLoughlin	Chair of Transport for the North Board
Martin Tugwell	Chief Executive
Gary Rich	Democratic Services Officer
Julie Openshaw	Head of Legal
David Hoggarth	Head of Strategic Rail
Charlie French	Investment Planning Manager
Darren Oldham	Rail and Road Director
Gary Bogan	Rail North Partnership Director

Item No: Item

1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chief Executive welcomed Members and apologies were received from Cllrs Browne, Shore, Hannigan and Mayor Houchen.

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chairs of Rail North Committee

- 2.1 The Chief Executive invited nominations for the Chair of the Rail North Committee. Mayor Driscoll proposed Mayor Burnham and this was seconded by Mayor Coppard.
- 2.2 The Chair then invited nominations for the majority group Vice Chair. Mayor Rotheram proposed Cllr Hinchcliffe and this was seconded by Cllr Gannon.
- 2.3 The appointment of a Minority Party Vice Chair was deferred until the September meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) That Mayor Burnham be appointed Chair of the Rail North Committee for the 2023-24 Municipal Year
- 2) That Cllr Hinchcliffe be appointed majority group Vice Chair of the Rail North Committee for the 2023-24 Municipal Year
- 3) That the appointment of the minority group Vice Chair be deferred until the next meeting.

3. Declarations of Interest

- 3.1 There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 4.1 The minutes of the Consultation Call held on 22 February 2023 were considered for their accuracy.
- 4.2 Mayor Rotheram requested that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority be referred to as a Combined Authority to be consistent with the other combined authorities. He also requested that minute 5.7 be amended to read that people find it 'more difficult to visit Liverpool at weekends because they cannot be certain of their return journeys.'
- 4.3 Cllr Hinchcliffe requested an update on the Leeds study Terms of Reference.

The Chief Executive explained that TfN had been told that this would be ready for the end of May; however there is still no firm date and TfN will continue to press the Department on this matter.

Cllr Hinchcliffe requested that the Committee continues to press on this matter.

- 4.4 The Chair stated that a case needs to be constructed for building a railway needed for the future, namely one that allows for major events to take place in the north of the country where people can access them via public transport with fewer issues specifically focussing on later night transport.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Consultation Call held on 22 February 2023 be noted subject to the changes requested by Mayor Rotheram.

5. Operators Business Plans

5.1 Members received the report from the Head of Strategic Rail who highlighted the key points in the report.

5.2 The Chair introduced the item by stating that this is an opportunity to consider how the North can support improving the railway rather than merely restoring it to a stable position. He explained that that the North is being told that this will be difficult financially and he encouraged the committee to challenge a whole country planning approach as cuts to services in the north mean whole communities can be left isolated. He stated that the conversation should be about improvement and highlighted the strong recovery to rail in the north.

On the issue of timetabling, he highlighted the success (in terms of performance) of the December 22 timetable change stating that the industry was seeking a 20% reduction in lateness and that the achievement has been 40%; he believes that approach taken may have been over cautious.

5.3 Cllr Hinchcliffe highlighted the importance of the social impact highlighting the fact that stopping rail services and disconnecting communities from growth is damaging for the economy and country.

She then highlighted a number of services within the West Yorkshire area that had been taken out of the timetable and sought assurance that these services will be replaced if there is capacity to do so. She also sought a commitment that there will be no further changes or detriment to services in the December 23 timetable.

5.4 The Chair suggested that the position needs to be reviewed as to the areas which suffered detriment in December 2022 and if there is any funding availability, then the industry should be asked to look at the scope for reinstatement of services. On the issue of funding this he stated his belief that there is some scope for efficiency as both operators are now under the operator of last resort (OLR).

5.5 Lord McLoughlin suggested that there should be an opportunity to look for revenue growth which will help to provide other services that are needed. He also highlighted the opportunity for station redevelopment with both providers now under the operator of last resort. He stressed the importance of grasping and developing this opportunity.

5.6 Mayor Driscoll stated the importance of making things simpler for the travelling public with transport being integrated leading to increased passenger numbers and greater revenue.

- 5.7 Mayor Coppard welcomed the direction of travel and recognised that there may not be a return to pre-Covid positions with a return to all services that existed previously. He did however request that progress be made to the return of some of the services in his area and stated his willingness to engage with operators to achieve this.
- 5.8 Mr Richard George highlighted the importance of prioritisation of leaders in the north to the process. He stated that the priorities of the North are very different to those involved in the business planning process in the DfT. He stressed the importance of the North's voice remaining strong. In response to the 40% reduction in late trains Mr George explained that it worked well as everyone was involved in working together and he cautioned against wanting to use the capacity more because of the improved performance and explained that improved performance was about using the capacity well.

The Chair congratulated the operators and partners on the 40% reduction in lateness.

- 5.9 Cllr Hinchliffe requested that the DfT be pressed on the issue of social inclusion and diversity and their decision making and is worried about the constant cutting of services. She also explained that this needs to be reflected in the settlement that operators receive from Government.
- 5.10 The Rail and Road Director suggested that the work on prioritisation be considered before returning it to the committee in advance of the September meeting.
- 5.11 Lord McLoughlin asked if there is any flexibility for TPE to have online sales which might include integrated travel. /In response Richard George stated that more revenue earning schemes will be considered, but stated that this is difficult.

The Chair asked for the operators to try to be more innovative.

- 5.12 He asked whether there would be an efficiency gain as a result of both operators being under the control of the same OLR as a result of the reduction in duplication that can be realised within the timeframe and be part of a funding package that supports the ambitions of the committee.

Mr George explained that having the two operators under the OLR will allow for more joined up thinking and collaboration but doubted that there will be more money to utilise. He informed the Committee that Northern and TPE will not be merging as this is something that they have not been asked to do and emphasised that collaborative working is the way forward, but this will not necessarily generate funds for other uses.

- 5.13 Mr Nick Donovan highlighted the importance of long term thinking and explained that the planning for timetable changes starts well in advance of their implementation.

- 5.14 On the issue of stations, the Head of Strategic Rail explained that there is a massive opportunity and that Northern have been working on a programme called 'Stations as a place' where stations are made part of the community with modern facilities and retail outlets. He further stated that there is now an opportunity to work with TransPennine Express in a similar way.
- 5.15 Mayor Rotherham stated that stations need to be made more accessible to passengers.
- 5.16 Cllrs Hinchcliffe, Gannon and Swarbrick volunteered to be part of the Business Planning Working Group together with constituent authority officers on priorities.

Resolved:

That the, the strategic priorities for train operator business plans for 2024/25 are amended in line with the discussion and brought back to the next meeting for consideration.

6. Infrastructure and Future Service Development

- 6.1 Members received the report from the Investment Planning Manager who highlighted the key points.
- 6.2 The Head of Strategic Rail informed the Committee that an amendment to the report had been proposed by Warrington. He explained that whilst they recognise the work in Manchester they have suffered a reduction in connectivity and service opportunity and have suggested that the second recommendation should 'note' the successful delivery of Manchester and North West Transformation Programme Configuration State 1 infrastructure and implementation of the December 2022 timetable change rather than 'welcome' it. The Committee agreed this amendment.
- 6.3 The Rail and Road Director informed the Committee that this is a draft document and as there is awareness of the strong views around aspects of the report he anticipates the need for strengthening of some aspects of the report. He also recognised the fact that things have changed since the publication of the report.
- 6.4 Mayor Coppard highlighted the challenges experienced in South Yorkshire which should begin to improve when the Leeds Area Study work begins.
- 6.5 Lord McLoughlin requested more background as to why what was suggested in the 2014 through the Transport & Works Act Order was now no longer appropriate.

In response the investment Planning Manager explained that the 2014 Order covered what was known as 'Package C' which covered

remodelling of Manchester Oxford Road, work on the corridor and Platforms 15 and 16 Manchester Piccadilly. It did not however take into consideration the improvements required around the corridor and subsequent work has found that much of the Manchester congestion stems from the routes that feed the corridor and therefore a broader package of works is required. He explained that as a revised scheme for Oxford Road has now been developed the previous order needs to be removed to allow the new scheme to go ahead

- 6.6 The Chair expressed his frustration that almost a decade has passed since the first submission which is not good news for the residents of the North of England.

He went on to express concern at the reference to a new baseline timetable which he views as a 'reductionist new reality' where the work was intended to allow an expanded timetable. He sought reassurance that this would not dilute the ambition and a timeline for the work to be completed and a plan to be outlined. He stated Greater Manchester's view on Platforms 15 and 16, reiterating the point that they are required.

- 6.7 Cllr Hinchcliffe welcomed the approach that taskforce has taken and the work that has been done, as work taking place in Manchester benefits the whole of the North. Mayor Rotherham stated that the benefits to the whole of the North need to be teased out more.

Cllr Hinchcliffe then raised the issue of connectivity to Manchester Airport and asked that this be within the scoping for Configuration State 3.

- 6.8 The Chair requested clarity on the position of Stockport as congested infrastructure.

The Investment Planning Manager explained that the concern with Stockport is the limitations that may arise as HS2 services begin to run through that part of the network in the interim period between phase 2a and 2b being built, and there is an expectation that there will be too many trains travelling through that part of the infrastructure.

Mayor Coppard asks how the Hope Valley line plays into this scenario.

The Investment Planning Manager explained that there are a number of trains competing to get through that part of the network in order to get to Manchester Piccadilly and there is a likelihood that it will become over capacity.

Mayor Burnham asked for clarity on what the DfT definition of congested infrastructure and requested that this be addressed in the next report.

- 6.9 Mr George stated that the Sheffield problem cannot be resolved without additional capacity.

- 6.10 The Chief Executive stated that the Committee and TfN need to be planning for growth. On the issue of congested infrastructure he explained that the response too often is how can the timetable be cut to make it less congested; however, what TfN and the committee are stating is that there is a demand that needs to be accommodated and the congestion means investment is required rather than a limitation to cut the timetable. He added that this is an opportunity for TfN to put forward suggestions to make the system work better in advance of legislation on Great British Railways. The Chief Executive requested more time work on this further and report this back to the Committee in September before reporting to the September Board meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Committee notes the progress of development of infrastructure schemes in the North, and the collaborative approach being undertaken by the industry working with partners and operators to drive the investment needed to support economic growth
- 2) That the Committee notes the successful delivery of Manchester and North West Transformation Programme Configuration State 1 infrastructure and implementation of the December 2022 timetable change
- 3) That the Committee welcomes the commitment from the Department for Transport to fund delivery of infrastructure in Configuration State 2 alongside the continued development of Configuration State 3
- 4) That the endorsement of Statutory Advice is deferred and that a further report is presented to the September Rail North Committee.

7. Rail North Partnership Operational Update

- 7.1 Members received the report from the Rail North Partnership Director who highlighted the key points of the report. Members also received a presentation for Mr Donovan who highlighted the key points within his presentation on revenue growth.
- 7.2 The Chair congratulated Northern on the work they are doing and stated that he hoped that TPE would soon be on a similar journey.
- 7.3 Mr Richard George provided an update on TPE. He explained that it was a very quick transition taking the company into operator of last resort. He praised the work of the previous Managing Director of TPE and their managers and Directors for all their hard work on the recovery plan. He explained that Mr Jackson is now the new Interim Managing Director as the organisation needed a reset. He explained that the key issue is to understand what is happening with the plan and the trajectory going forward. He stated that it is dealing with the right issue, specifically the need for more drivers but there are many other issues as well.
- 7.4 Mr Chris Jackson outlined TPE's three key priorities which are to reduce cancellations, reset relationships and to support the delivery of the

Transpennine Route Upgrade. He confirmed that the Committee can hold him to account on these three priorities.

He explained that an operational deep dive has been commissioned covering every aspect of the operation identifying what are the causal issues and what can be done to remedy these and this will be used to create a plan. He stated that the business has become far too complicated, with 4 different types of train creating a large training burden and over 5,000 outstanding training days which need to be reduced to improve reliability. He also highlighted that only 50% of drivers are competent to drive all types of train and all routes.

- 7.5 The Chair asked Mr Jackson to convey to his staff that at no point did the Committee mean to suggest that they were part of the problem and he offered the staff the Committee's support.

On the Rail Academy he asked if the academy can be integrated to serve both operators. He also requested an update on rest day working.

Mr George informed the Committee that he views rest day working as an accelerator but it is inappropriate to run a railway like this in the long term. He stated that more drivers are needed so that they can run a system that allows them to work without rest day working. However, the current situation means that this needs to be used in order to cut through the training backlog as quickly as possible.

Mr Jackson echoed Mr George's view and explained that this issue is at the top of his list and stated he wanted to come to an agreement with ASLEF on this issue as soon as possible.

Mr Donovan addressed the question about the academy. He explained that they are looking to have an integrated approach across operators.

The Chair asked that they work with Members on the academy as they will be able to put them in touch with relevant colleges who can help.

- 7.6 On the issue of train cancellations Lord McLoughlin stressed the issue of reliability and asked Mr Jackson to address the issue of short term cancellations whilst Mayor Rotherham asked him to look at short forming.
- 7.7 Cllr Hinchcliffe requested assurance that if services are reduced to get back on track any such services taken out are resumed.
- 7.8 Mayor Coppard suggested the Doncaster Rail College which is closing down as a location for the rail academy. He then went on to implore Mr Jackson to keep travelling public at the forefront of their thinking and planning.

In response Mr Jackson said that the customer is at the front and centre of his mind and he accepted that the public need to see a tangible difference.

- 7.9 The Chair welcomed Mr Jackson's remarks and invited him back to the September meeting of the Committee. Mr Jackson agreed to do so and also wants to meet with Members in July to begin presenting the plan.

Resolved:

- 1) 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) That the update on TransPennine Express is noted and that Mr Jackson is invited to return to the September meeting of the Committee to discuss the findings of the review.

8. Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 13 September 2023
11.00am
Microsoft Teams

9. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 10 on the grounds that:

- (1) It is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during such item(s), confidential information as defined in S100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) would be disclosed to them in breach of the obligation of confidence; and/or
- (2) it / they involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as set out in the Paragraphs [listed below] of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

10. Private Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 10.1 The private minutes of the Consultation Call held on 22 February 2023 were considered for their accuracy.

Resolved:

That the private minutes of the Consultation Call held on 22 February 2023 be noted.