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**Meeting:** Rail North Committee Consultation Call  
**Subject:** Rail North Partnership Operational Update  
**Author:** Gary Bogan, Rail North Partnership Director  
**Sponsor:** Darren Oldham, Rail and Road Director  
**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, 14 November 2023

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**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.

**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 focus on delivering the services passengers need.
- 2.2 In light of the temporary changes to Avanti West Coast services highlighted in paragraphs 7.7 and 7.8, the Managing Director of Avanti be invited to the next meeting of the Committee to set out their plans for the remainder of the contract.

**3. Overview:**

- 3.1 A summary of performance for the last 6 months for TransPennine Express and Northern services 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 dating back to covid. These indicate a significant reduction in the level of cancellations on TransPennine Express outside of industrial action periods.
- 3.2 In the North of England further strikes took place on 30 September 2023 and 4 October 2023. Additionally, national action short of strike (including Rest Day Working (RDW) withdrawal) by ASLEF impacted services.
- 3.3 Both Transport for the North and Rail North Partnership individually and through the RNP board are working with Northern and TransPennine Express to enable the operators to take appropriate actions for their respective businesses. RNP is using its contractual relationship with operators to ensure there are appropriate recovery plans in place and hold them to account for delivery.
- 3.4 In the context of operators' business plans, RNP will be stressing that any new growth in costs will need good revenue growth both in modelling and practically (revenue collection), meaning that good practice on ticket checking and fares evasion measures will be very important for operators to demonstrate.

**4. TransPennine Express:**

- 4.1 Following the transfer to DOHL, the new TransPennine Trains Ltd (TPT) management team implemented a new rest day working (RDW) agreement with ASLEF, enabling a step up in training and associated improvement in performance.
- 4.2 As a result drivers with all the route and traction knowledge they need is now around 65%, up from 55%, with more than 90% having 85% knowledge. TPT's driver-training backlog has fallen from more than 6,000 days to around 2,500.

- 4.3 On days not affected by national industrial action cancellations are now around 5%, down from previous levels of around 25%.
- 4.4 The December 2023 timetable changes are designed to manage the closing of TPT's competency gap alongside backfilling for the around 60 drivers TPT expects to leave over the next 12 months.
- 4.5 On 19 October 2023 TPT published Making Journeys Better: A Prospectus, which set out the issues the operator has faced during the past two years and outlines how, now under DOHL (since 28 May 2023), it will stabilise its services, re-engage with customers and stakeholders and transform its network through investment in improved customer offer. The prospectus is available here: [TPE Our Plan for the Future a Prospectus \(tpexpress.co.uk\)](https://tpexpress.co.uk)
- 4.6 The plan includes:
- A ticket sale to encourage passengers back to TransPennine Express;
  - Improved on-train toilet serviceability
  - A refresh of the older trains (Class 185s) to include the replacement of carpets, seat covers and an interior deep clean
  - A temporary step-down in services in December 2023 timetable, from 320 to 300 services daily, to stabilise services and reduce a training backlog. This has been agreed by Northern leaders subject to criteria and timelines for reinstating these services.
- 4.7 RNP continues to constantly monitor the operator's performance and is in frequent contact with its senior management and operational teams.
- 4.8 A request for a business plan was sent to TPT on 29 September 2023, and operator-specific instructions followed on 19 October 2023. On 6 November 2023 RNP held its first stakeholder consultation meeting, which will also include Network Rail and TfN.
- 4.9 TPT's current RDW agreement expires in March 2024. It may be necessary to extend that agreement, but TPT's aim is to reach a point where RDW is not required to deliver services or routine training (although it may be required to meet spikes in training or special events).
- 4.10 TPT is already at more than 70% digital tickets sales, and increasing this further will take time. TPT's 2024/25 business plan proposes further initiatives to move from paper to digital, but these will need to be assessed by RNP.
- 4.11 With RNP approval, TPT will trial a new catering offer on its West Coast services, beginning in January 2024.
- 5. Northern Trains:**
- 5.1 While cancellation rates have reduced over the last couple of periods, they remain below target. Train crew availability continues to be the primary cause, driven by three key factors: sickness, skills and Sundays. Northern provided an update at the September 2023 committee meeting and continues to progress its improvement plan, however some of these areas can only be addressed through wider reform. Activity Northern is undertaking includes reviewing the effectiveness of train crew diagram links to improve coverage and availability, reducing on the day cancellations.
- 5.2 The next timetable change takes place on 10 December 2023. There are no significant changes to timetables, but there are some changes to rolling stock allocations. In making the changes, Northern has sought to match capacity to demand as far as possible (for example by reducing capacity on Settle-Carlisle services during the winter months, but increasing in in time for the Easter holiday period). Changes will be monitored closely.

- 5.3 Following briefings to members in the summer, Northern's wider customer communications commenced in the autumn. Timetable change information is available at <https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/travel/timetables/timetable-change>.
- 5.4 To support customers making informed decisions about their travel patterns Northern's website now hosts a savings calculator, which compares journeys by train and car to see potential cost and time savings while reducing passengers' carbon footprint <https://www.northernrailway.co.uk/train-vs-car-comparison>.
- 5.5 Underlying growth remains strong at around 7%, driven by the positive performance of advance ticketing and marketing activity. One in three Northern customers are now choosing to travel with an Advanced Purchase ticket. Their popularity has partly been driven by the addition of Seatfrog's 'Train Swap', which was introduced in the spring. This gives customers the confidence in changing train up to just 10 minutes prior to their original departure time, with fees as low as £2.50. Education Season tickets are also increasingly popular, with students now also able to use their tickets during the holidays.
- 5.6 RNP is currently developing a Business Case for the replacement of the oldest diesel trains in the Northern fleet (Class 150, 155, and 156) with new multi-mode trains. This represents a bigger new fleet order than the recently introduced new trains to replace the Pacer trains and one of the biggest replacement programmes in the UK. These trains will deliver key aims of growing and levelling up the economy, improving transport for the user and reducing environmental impacts through the reduction of older diesel trains with newer multi-powered technology.

## **6. TransPennine Route Upgrade**

- 6.1 TRU has successfully delivered - on schedule - three major blockades so far during 2023, two at Morley (February 2023 and June 2023) and one at Stalybridge (March/April 2023).
- 6.2 In the second half of 2023 disruption is confined to weekends, and this is allowing TPT and NTL to prepare for the increase in disruption planned for 2024. Through working closely together, the two operators are re-assessing the customer handling team structure, bolstering the team through additional recruitment and implementing actions to enhance the 'one team' approach already adopted.

## **7. Other operators:**

### **East Midlands Railway**

- 7.1 EMR's performance in Period 7 was high, with 74.3% T-3 and 97.2% T-15, with a network cancellation rate of 2.6% and a short formation rate of 0.62%.
- 7.2 Period 7 also saw EMR's Service Quality Regime (SQR) hit eight out of nine benchmarks on service quality at stations, on trains and customer service. Online Information for Customers scored 100% for the sixth period in a row and Train Cleanliness hit a year-to-date high of almost 92%.
- 7.3 EMR will be returning the 0851 service from Liverpool Lime Street – Nottingham in the December 2023 timetable change, as well as strengthening the 0521 Nottingham – Liverpool Lime Street and 0635 Nottingham – Liverpool Lime Street services.

### **Lumo**

- 7.4 Lumo saw high passenger numbers during a busy summer period for the operator. While engineering works along various parts of their route impacted their ability to run services, it ran more bus and train combination journeys to keep passengers moving, having seen success on some earlier trials.
- 7.5 Period 5 saw an improvement across performance, with all targets being met, though a fatality on the last day of the period which damaged one of their trains,

resulted in there being a reduction in units available for service. This subsequently led to a decline in performance until the unit became available again. Period 7 was another poor period for performance due to Plessey viaduct being damaged, overhead line issues at Stevenage and several signal failures. Despite this, Lumo exceeded their PPM target with 79.7% against a target of 77.8% and their cancellation target with 1.3% of trains having been cancelled against a target of 3.4%.

- 7.6 Lumo's all-electric train fleet also continues to perform to a high standard, delivering a high level of reliability and taking passengers away from the London – Edinburgh air market.

### **Avanti West Coast (AWC)**

- 7.7 On 18 October 2023 AWC announced temporary changes to its timetable from Saturday 9 December 2023 to Sunday 31 December 2023. These changes are to address anticipated resourcing challenges due to historic annual leave agreements and ongoing industrial disputes.
- 7.8 From 11 to 15 December 2023 and on 22 December 2023, 10 trains have been removed, 4 Northbound and 6 Southbound. From 18 to 21 December, 18 trains have been removed, 8 Northbound and 10 Southbound. On Saturdays 9, 16, 23 and 30 December 2023 the Manchester route will operate with 2 trains per hour all day, with a further two services removed from the timetable on 23 December 2023.

### **Hull Trains**

- 7.9 Hull Trains continues to see strong passenger numbers, including a recovery not just in leisure but also with business customers who are travelling in greater numbers on their usual business services. Weekend services are particularly busy, especially during the ongoing electrification modernisation works taking place on the Midland Mainline.
- 7.10 The company recently announced a 12-month trial of a Standard Class catering service, having withdrawn the service during the pandemic. Recruitment and training is ongoing with an expected service launch in December 2023.
- 7.11 Hull Trains has also confirmed an 11.8% increase in seating capacity from the December 2023 timetable change, with longer trains, targeting busy periods where demand is high and existing industry capacity is constrained.
- 7.12 Hull Trains' year to date PPM figure is 84% against a target of 85.8%, with cancellations at 2.3% against a target of 1.3%. Performance over the last quarter was affected by external factors, such as trespassers, signalling failures and overhead line issues at Stevenage.

## **8. Corporate Considerations:**

### ***Financial Implications***

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

### ***Resource Implications***

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

### ***Legal Implications***

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

### ***Risk Management and Key Issues***

- 8.4 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***

- 8.5 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 managing private car vehicle mileage.

***Equality and Diversity***

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

**9. Appendices**

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Performance update.

**Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used**

a) RNP	Rail North Partnership
b) RDW	Rest Day Working
c) TPE	TransPennine Express
d) TRU	TransPennine Route Upgrade
e) NTL	Northern Trains Ltd
f) ASLEF	The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
g) DOHL	Department for Transport OLR Holdings Ltd
h) TPT	TransPennine Trains Ltd

## Appendix 1.

### Performance update

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

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)

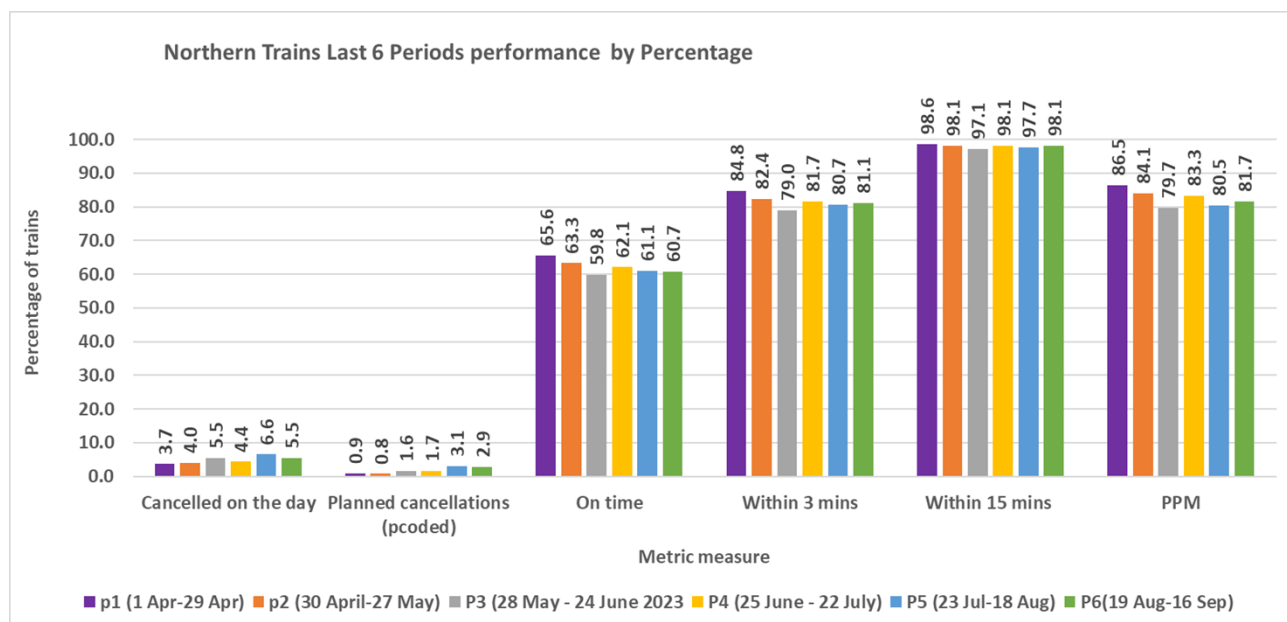
TPT continue to reduce train services through implementing planned service reductions before 22.00 hours the previous day. Period six sees a significant reduction in these p-coded services. These services do not reflect in the overall performance of cancellations but are referenced in the performance charts below as a percentage of trains P-coded.

Northern P-coded trains have slightly decreased in period six.

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.

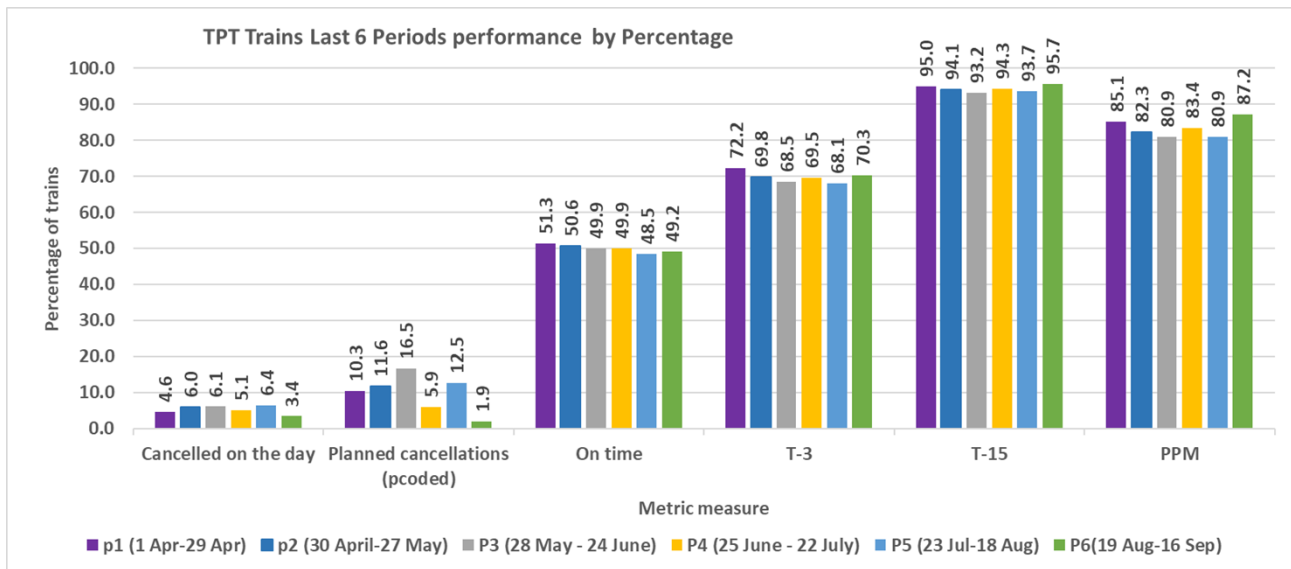
### Northern



With the exception of on-time metric, performance has improved for period six compared to period five.

Although PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that PPM was at its lowest level in period 3 then improved in period 4dipped in period five and improved again in period six

### TPT



TransPennine Trains' performance has improved across all metrics in periods six.

P-coded services peaked at 16.5% and has since significantly reduced to 1.9 percent in period six which is at its lowest level since December 2021.

PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that PPM has significantly improved to 87.2% which is at its highest level for the last 12 months.