

Transport for the North Board Minutes

14 December 2023
Hacienda Suite, Holiday Inn Manchester

Present:

Lord McLoughlin (Chair)

Attendee

Cllr Phil Riley
Cllr Louise Gittins
Cllr Anne Handley
Cllr Paul West
Mayor Andy Burnham

Cllr Mark Ieronimo
Mayor Steve Rotheram
Cllr Martin Gannon
Cllr Tim Mitchell
Mayor Oliver Coppard

Cllr Stephen Harker
Cllr Hans Mundry
Cllr Neil Hughes
Mayor Tracy Brabin
Cllr Peter Kilbane

Local Authority

Blackburn with Darwen;
Cheshire West & Chester;
East Riding of Yorkshire;
East Riding of Yorkshire;
Greater Manchester Combined
Authority;
Hull;
Liverpool City Region;
North East Combined Authority;
North Lincolnshire;
South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined
Authority;
Tees Valley;
Warrington;
Westmorland and Furness;
West Yorkshire Combined Authority;
York

Rail North Authorities Attendees

Cllr Carolyn Renwick

Derbyshire County Council

Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Attendees

Roy Newton
Mark Rawstron

Cheshire & Warrington LEP
Lancashire LEP

Partners in Attendance:

Amy Williams
Rob McIntosh
Nick Bisson
Emma Ward

National Highways
Network Rail
DfT
DfT

Officers in Attendance:

Name
Martin Tugwell

Job Title
Chief Executive

Gary Rich
Katie Day

Julie Openshaw
Darren Oldham
Joanne Barclay

Democratic Services Officer
Director of Strategy, Analysis and
Communications
Head of Legal
Rail and Road Director
Senior Solicitor

**Item Item
No:**

1. Welcome & Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and apologies were received from Mayor Driscoll, Cllrs Kemp, Duncan, Rollo, Swinburn, Lynn Williams, Browne, Swarbrick, Scott Smith, Tom Smith as well as Helen Simpson, Alex Batey, Alyson Armett, Justin Kelly and John Hall.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Ms. Emma Ward the Director General of Roads and Local Transport from the DfT. He also noted that he had received written comments from Mayor Driscoll in relation to the papers before the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no additional Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Transport for the North Board held on 27 September 2023 were considered.
- 3.2 Members received at the same time a written update on matters arising (including a copy of the Quarterly Operating Report) from the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive noted that at the last meeting, Board had agreed its response on Ticket Office closure proposals put forward by the train operators, which the Government has subsequently instructed operators to stop. He noted that there are on-going conversations through the Rail North Committee on opportunities to redefine the role of stations in their communities through the 'Stations as a Place' initiative promoted by Northern. He also noted that the new statutory advice on rail issues in and around Manchester/Stockport, which was signed off at the previous meeting was even more relevant given the decision to cancel HS2 phases 2a and 2b.

Members were informed that there will be a substantive item on buses at the next meeting and their attention drawn to the current position on the proposals for the major road network set out in the note. He then informed Board that the next TfN Conference will take place on the 5 February 2024 in Liverpool. Members will be receiving further information about this shortly.

- 3.3 Mayor Brabin requested that the minutes of the previous meeting recorded her contribution to the discussion on the future of HS2: specifically, the concern she expressed about the impact that cancelling

later phases of HS2 would have for the North as a whole, and her concern about the lack of progress with identifying a long-term solution Leeds Station. The meeting agreed to so amend the minutes.

- 3.4 Cllr Hughes raised, in the context of the Government's Network North announcement, the issue of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and requested clarity on whether this would be an annual award, as working in this way hinders forward planning.

- 3.5 Cllr Mundry raised his concern that the North had lost out on funding following the cancellation of HS2 Phases 2a and 2b. Additionally, he emphasised the importance of having mechanisms put in place to monitor progress with how the money is being spent.

He also requested that the Western link in Warrington be included in future thinking on investment priorities.

The Chair agreed that progress in delivering commitments set out in the Network North document need to be monitored.

- 3.6 The Chair welcomed Ms Ward and expressed TfN's eagerness to work with the Department to get the best deal for North following publication of the Network North document. He stated that the conference announcement had given rise to widespread concerns across the North of England.

- 3.7 On the issue of HS2 Ms Ward recognised that the decision taken on this would not be one that everyone on the TfN Board would support. She was keen that the TfN Board and the Department explore collaboratively how the opportunities presented in the Network North proposals can be grasped.

Addressing the issue of long-term funding certainty raised earlier by Cllr Hughes she stated that huge strides have been made in this area in recent years and that aspects of the Network North document look to build on that. She highlighted a number of areas where the Department has put long term funding in place including City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements (CRSTS) allocations, local highways maintenance allocations, and the prospect of Local Integrated Transport Settlements (LITS) for local authorities outside of Mayoral Combined Authorities.

She stated her belief that this has the ability to be transformational in local places and make a difference to the way people perceive investment in transport and address concerns that the general public may have. She emphasised the fact that Network North will provide a transformational opportunity to drive better connectivity within towns, as well as between towns and cities, and improve everyday journeys for the public.

She emphasised to the Board that the Department is ready to work with it and TfN officers./On the issue of BSIPs she set out the progress that has been made since securing long term funding across some Departmental budget lines. She highlighted the decisions of Ministers as evidence that they understand how long-term certainty is what will make

the biggest difference. She also highlighted the significance of the Government investment to support the £2 bus ticket initiative.

- 3.8 Cllr Gannon highlighted the fact that the investment decisions being made are ultimately Treasury decisions. He welcomed the long term funding approach and the amount of money that the North East will be receiving for transport as part of their new Mayoral Combined Authority. However he then served to illustrate how, if the figures are broken, the amount of additional money would be around £140 million up to 2027. He emphasised that whilst an increase in funding was always to be welcomed, the reality was that it would not be enough to achieve the agreed policy outcomes for the North East.

- 3.9 Mayor Coppard asked whether the Secretary of State had been invited to the meeting. In addressing the issue of cynicism around the Network North announcement Mayor Coppard stated that this comes from the communities that Board Members represent where they have had to endure sub-standard transport for many years. After being promised improvements, these have been taken away and replaced with a series of announcements that do not have planning and business cases in place and which will take years to deliver.

He reminded the Board that South Yorkshire is the biggest region in the country not to be granted BSIP money and that there has been a 40% decrease in bus routes across South Yorkshire over the last decade. He stressed the urgency of this matter and looked for comments as to how this can be addressed as people are missing out on important everyday events due to there being no available bus services. He requested data on the extent to which the £2 bus fare has driven up demand.

The Chair informed Board that Ministers had been invited but the meeting clashed with Transport Ministers' Questions in Parliament. The TfN Executive was liaising with Ministers' private office on inviting Ministers to attend a future Board meeting.

- 3.10 Mayor Brabin highlighted that travel between Manchester and Leeds is always going to be a challenge, with 46% of rail journeys delayed or cancelled: she argued that improving East West connectivity is an issue that Network North does not address sufficiently. She looked for a commitment for the T-shaped station at Leeds as the long-term solution for the station, which is the 3rd largest source of delays across the entire rail network. She emphasised that without a fundamental shift in capacity, fast trains from the new Bradford station and Manchester will not be able to get into Leeds.

On the issue of the safeguarded land, she stressed that this must continue for the present because priorities change and TfN must ensure that decisions made now do not curtail ambition for the future. She requested that the Department works with Leeds City Council to ensure that this is the case.

Whilst welcoming the money being spent for a mass transit system for Leeds, she sought clarity from the Department as to how the remaining Leeds Area Study money will be spent. Mayor Brabin emphasised the

importance of the electrification of both the line between Leeds and Sheffield and that to Hull.

- 3.11 On the issue of Manchester to Liverpool rail connectivity, Cllr Mundry emphasised the importance of Warrington Bank Quay station and asked for it to be included as part of the consideration of that link. He also suggested an opportunity for a turnback in Warrington which will double the capacity between Manchester and Liverpool at a minimal cost. Mayor Rotherham was supportive of the need to consider such suggestions.

- 3.12 In response to Members' questions and comments Ms Ward addressed a number of the points. She confirmed that she will ensure Members views will be shared with Ministers.

On the points on funding levels she acknowledged the Board's concerns on this; however, she shared her experience of working with local authorities on securing local growth deals and associated funding and stated the benefits of funding being consolidated to provide longer term. She highlighted that this is what is now being done through successive rounds of CRSTS and the new local integrated funding settlements.

She acknowledged that there will be differences of opinion as to what is new and old money but emphasised that there has been a shift in the emphasis given within the Department on the North's needs.

In addressing Members' comments on buses Ms Ward offered to try to get the Director with responsibility for buses to attend the next TfN Board meeting. She recognised Members' concerns about the BSIP funding and understood the concerns expressed as to what the lack of BSIP funding meant for a number of TfN partners. She stated that she would take away for further consideration the comments made by Mayor Coppard with regards to the issues in the South Yorkshire area.

On the issue of increased bus patronage (as a result of the £2 fare initiative), Ms Ward stated that the Department does not currently have full national picture; however she noted that on some routes and in some places there has been a demand effect but cautioned as to whether this is solely due to the £2 fare.

- 3.13 Mayor Rotherham expressed his disappointment that the funding previously identified for HS2 has not all been allocated to the North and requested clarity from the Department as to how the HS2 funds have been reallocated. Additionally on the issue of BSIP he suggested that it should be a priority to get a fleet of zero emission buses across the North in support of its ambitions to decarbonise the transport system and improve air quality.
- 3.14 Cllr Gannon highlighted the impact of the £1 bus fare for under 21s in North East and committed to making this information available to the TfN executive.
- 3.15 Ms Ward sought to clarify how the money previously allocated to HS2 would be allocated. She explained that the money allocated to HS2 in the North would be spent on projects in the North, which is a total of £19.8 billion.

- 3.16 Mayor Coppard built on comments made by Mayor Rotherham and supported the need for clarification on the full costs being saved as a result of the cancellation of HS2 and how this money will be allocated to the North.
- 3.17 In summing up the discussion, the Chair noted that whilst the progress being made with Combined Authorities in terms of devolution and longer term budgets was welcomed, it was clear that the concerns of Board meant that clarity is still needed on a number of significant issues.

Resolved:

- 1) That the minutes of the Transport for the North Board held on 27 September 2023 be approved as a correct record.
- 2) That the written Matters Arising update and the Quarterly Operating Report, be noted.
- 3) That Ms Ward's update on Network North and Member's comments be noted.

4. Transforming the North

- 4.1 Members received the report of the Chief Executive who outlined the key aspects of the report, noting in the process that the preceding discussion had highlighted areas of concern that were themselves captured in the covering paper.
- 4.2 Mr Roy Newton raised the issue of constraints on the West Coast Main Line that will not be addressed because of the cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham. He stated that work being undertaken by partners in the wider Crewe sub-region should not be taken in isolation but coordinated as part of the wider commitment to level up the North. In this he requested TfN's help with this as local partners develop their proposals. He welcomed TfN's support in seeking additional funding to enable partners to examine the implications of the cancellation of HS2 and what it means in terms of alternatives for local transport. The Chair highlighted the work being commissioned by Mayors Burnham and Street which will have an impact for the Cheshire area and stated that TfN would monitor progress with it.
- 4.3 Mr Rawstron stated that urgency is needed in getting the clarification on the strategic issues identified in the covering paper, emphasising that cancellation of HS2 north of Birmingham has led to private sector investment being put on hold. He highlighted that in order for additional private sector investment to be unlocked there needs to be clarity provided as a matter of some urgency.
- 4.4 Given the extensive discussion under the preceding item and the extent to which it had considered items set out in the covering paper for this item, the Chair moved the recommendations before the meeting.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board approves the following advice to the Secretary of State:

- i) Until such time as an alternative set of proposal(s) for improved connectivity and capacity between the North and the Midlands has been identified, safeguarding associated with HS2 should remain in place;
 - ii) Where there is agreement with the relevant local transport authority(ies) that it is appropriate, the safeguarding associated with HS2 should be lifted at the earliest opportunity;
 - iii) Where funding is allocated through Network North this should be ring fenced for transport purposes, and authorities should be allowed to manage allocations as a programme of investment;
 - iv) As the Secretary of State's statutory partner, the Department for Transport should look to the TfN Board to provide oversight and leadership in co-ordinating activities of pan-regional significance arising out of the Network North document.
- 2) That to improve efficiency of delivery, Board approves that TfN should work with the Department for Transport, the National Infrastructure Commission and other Government Departments, to build on TfN's existing analytical capability to develop a Northern Appraisal Framework: one that whilst consistent with the requirements of HMT, better reflects the situation in the North.
- 3) That Board approves the publication of the revised Strategic Transport Plan at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that the statutory framework within which specific proposals, including those identified through the Network North document, are brought forward is up to date.
- 4) That it be approved that TfN work with the Department for Transport to update the Co-sponsorship Arrangement for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) so as to strengthen the role of partners in agreeing and then taking forward the NPR proposal in light of the Network North document.
- 5) That TfN should engage with the National Infrastructure Commission on their proposed rail study for the North arising out of the National Infrastructure Assessment 2 (NIA2).
- 6) That TfN should work with the Welsh Government to determine the priorities for investment on the North Wales Main Line.
- 7) That TfN should work with its partners to identify the resource requirements (both financial and skills) arising from the need for additional work to be undertaken in order to develop specific proposals as a consequence of the Network North document.

5. Strategic Transport Plan Update

- 5.1 Members received the report from the Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications who outlined the key points of her report.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board endorses the decision to defer the adoption of the STP (until March 2024) to enable us to work with our partners to fully consider the implications of the Network North announcement.
- 2) That Board notes the work to date to amend the document post consultation.

6. Strategic Transport Plan Implementation

- 6.1 Members received the report from the Director of Strategy, Analysis and Communications who outlined the key points of her report.
- 6.2 Mayor Brabin highlighted the importance of having figures included in the report that illustrate the level of investment needed in the North. In this context she emphasised the need for the STP to be strengthened by setting out an investment programme for the North that can be used to frame the Board's advice on pan-regional investment priorities.
- 6.3 Cllr Mundry emphasised the importance of continuing to speak with one voice and have one vision for the North: a view that was endorsed by the meeting.
- 6.4 In response to Mayor Brabin's comments the Chief Executive noted that there will be a spending review in the near future and that this is a good time to have the evidence base to illustrate what is needed to deliver outcomes relating to the economy, environment and societal benefits.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board supports the development of advice focused on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation;
- 2) That Board's comments be noted on the proposal to focus TfN's advice around the themes of:
 - i) System Reform
 - ii) The role of TfN in enabling and supporting implementation
 - iii) The development of a strategic (pan-regional) infrastructure pipeline.

7. Rail North Committee Update

- 7.1 Members received the report from the Rail and Road Director who outlined the key points of his report, highlighting in particular the discussions and subsequent actions following the Committee's consideration of the proposed East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable change. He set out to the Board that – given the timescales involved – the RNC had resolved to ask this meeting to consider and agree TfN's position on the proposal.
- 7.2 Cllr Gannon informed the Board that following the Rail North Committee he had presented the ECML proposals to the North East Joint Transport Committee and it was the unanimous view of the seven authorities that

they did not wish to endorse the timetable changes. He explained that the decision not to electrify the Leamside line in the 1980s has caused a capacity issue on the ECML line which is constraining the area economically and socially. He added his concern that whilst there is currently no direct TPE service to Manchester, when TPE is able to start running a service he remained concerned that the lack of capacity on the ECML would not allow for it to be reintroduced.

He highlighted the benefits to both the North East and the UK as a whole of additional pan-regional services. He highlighted that in the letter from the Rail Minister to TfN (which had been circulated to the Board shortly prior to the meeting), a commitment was provided that interventions would begin to be put in place by 2027 subject to business case approvals and budgets. As a result of these reassurances and the benefits the timetable change will provide to the rest of the country, Cllr Gannon stated he would support the motion being put forward. In doing so he requested that the rest of the Board continue to support the North East on this matter by ensuring that the commitments made by the Rail Minister were delivered.

- 7.3 Mr Rob McIntosh explained that in 2021 Network Rail had concluded investing £1.2 billion elsewhere along the ECML corridor. He went on to set out how the proposed timetable change would enable the benefits of that investment to be realised by passengers along the corridor, in particular residents of the North. Additionally, he set out how the Department is funding Network Rail to progress the work to deliver the seventh path north of York, which is an important step in enabling improved pan-regional connectivity. In this regard the 2024 timetable is an interim step to further investment on the East Coast Mainline.

Mr Nick Bisson added that the Department is required to have a long-term plan of rail enhancements (the Rail Network Enhancement Programme (RNEP)) and he confirmed that the money required to deliver further improvements north of York has already been earmarked within the RNEP, subject to the completion of the development piece and business case.

- 7.4 Mayor Brabin sought clarification on the implications of the timetable for services to/from Bradford Foster Square, citing the importance of direct routes between Bradford and London.
- 7.5 Cllr Kilbane stated that the challenges facing the ECML had been worsened by the previous cancellation of the Eastern Leg of HS2. He added that with capacity a finite issue the regulators were now in a position of having to choose between passengers and freight.
- 7.6 The Chief Executive made Board aware that Mayor Driscoll had also provided comments on the proposed ECML timetable changes, in which he set out his clear concerns about the proposals before the Board.
- 7.7 The Chair, noting that there were no further contributions on the specific issue of the ECML timetable proposal drew the meeting's attention to a revised recommendation tabled by the TfN Executive. He outlined that

this sought to capture the concerns of the Board in accepting the proposed timetable amendments for 2024.

- 7.8 Mayor Burnham (Chair of the Rail North Committee) then provided the Board with an update on the work of the RNC.
- 7.9 He informed Board that the issue of addressing access to rail stations had been identified by the Committee as a key priority moving forward, so fundamental is the issue to its work. A Member Task and Finish group has been established and he emphasised the importance of the TfN Board keeping issues of accessibility at the forefront of its deliberations at all times./Mayor Burnham advised the Board that the Committee had also received updates from Avanti, Northern and TPE. He highlighted that since the Committee had met in the middle of November Avanti's performance on the West Coast Main Line had significantly deteriorated further, whilst also noting high cancellation levels across all three operators. He then provided up to date cancellation and reliability figures for each of the operators.

In setting out the deep frustration and anger amongst the business and wider community arising from the performance of Avanti West Coast he highlighted the significant negative economic and social impact this is having in the run up to Christmas.

He informed Board that the latest industry figures he had access to showed that 49.5% of Avanti trains arrived within the accepted timescales and 27% of trains were either cancelled or seriously delayed. He further stated that on the day of the meeting Avanti had cancelled 37 trains and that there were 11 part-cancellations due to train crew shortages. He reminded the Board that these issues were in themselves should be viewed in the context of the problems posed by an already reduced the timetable in the run up to Christmas. He invited the meeting to consider suggestions as to how this issue can be remedied.

- 7.10 Members were supportive of Mayor Burnham's comments about the extent to which the performance of Avanti was unacceptable. Cllr Gittins highlighted that direct services to/from Chester and North Wales had been decimated and she was concerned that the more services are taken away, the less likely it becomes that they will be reinstated.
- 7.11 Cllr Riley raised a wider issue of "short forming" amongst some operators and how this leads to unacceptable impacts on the comfort of passengers travelling with many left standing for the entire journey. He noted that this was happening on a daily basis for many people and emphasised the importance of the operators giving greater consideration as to the comfort of passengers.
- 7.12 Mayor Brabin stated that the resilience of the wider rail network is not where it should be due to the challenges in places such as Greater Manchester and Leeds, where limitations on capacity are a constraining factor.

She then addressed the issue of accessibility explaining that 71% of stations in West Yorkshire are not accessible: a fact that she considers to be unacceptable. In this she welcomed the focus being provided by the

RNC and welcomed the Task and Finish Group. Additionally, she drew the Board's attention to how the cost of the maintenance of new stations is transferred to local authorities, who already have stretched budgets. She cited West Yorkshire's experience with the new White Rose Station: whilst construction of the station is developer funded, the cost of operating the station for its lifetime has to be picked up by the Combined Authority. Mayor Brabin argued that this is a disincentive to supporting such development and further highlights the extent to which separating rail revenue and costs in the way the system currently does needs to be addressed. This, she stated, makes being ambitious on accessibility even more difficult as authorities have all of the costs and none of the revenues to help. She urged that there needs to be an examination of how funding for stations operates with a view to ensuring that such matters are addressed as part of the promised rail reform measures.

- 7.13 Mayor Coppard commented on the need for the Board to ensure that its debates and discussions benefit from ensuring that it has more voices that are representative of the diversity of the communities they represent. He requested that the TfN executive be asked to give this matter further consideration. The Chief Executive assured the Board that the executive would come back to the Board on this issue at its next meeting.
- 7.14 Cllr Hughes brought the Board's attention a concern that Avanti West Coast was still giving consideration to closing some of its ticket offices despite the industry wide proposal to close ticket offices being scrapped. He asked if TfN could examine this matter further.
- 7.15 Cllr Gannon raised a wider point about the issues of quality of train services and concerns that the investment in infrastructure and services was insufficient to achieve the desired transformation of the Northern economy. In doing so he emphasised the importance of seeing investment in the railways in terms of improving economic, environmental and social benefits.
- 7.16 In summarising the discussion, the Chair stated that it was clear there was widespread frustration and concern shared by all Board members about the performance of Avanti. In light of this he proposed that he and Mayor Burnham (as the Chair of the RNC) write jointly to the Secretary of State setting out the Board's collective view that Avanti's performance was not acceptable. He went on to propose that the letter should set out the need for the Department to undertake an urgent review of Avanti's performance, and that in conducting the review the Department should consider any and all options available to it.
- 7.17 Mayor Burnham supported the Chair's proposal, adding that given the level of performance it was essential that all the seats on the services that run are available at all times. With this in mind he proposed that the letter to the Secretary of State should call for the declassification of first-class accommodation until such time as performance levels are restored.
- 7.18 Cllr Gittins seconded the proposal to write to the Secretary of State, along the lines set out by the Chair and Mayor Burnham.

- 7.19 Cllr Hughes asked whether TfN can legally call for the declassification of trains. In response the Head of Legal confirmed that this can be included as part of the Statutory advice given to Government.

Resolved:

1. That Board notes the feedback from the Rail North Committee including the establishment of an Accessibility Task and Finish Group and the discussions with Avanti West Coast.
2. That Board agrees that the Chair/RNC Chair should formally write to the Secretary of State setting out its collective view that the performance of Avanti is unacceptable, that the Department should undertake an urgent review of Avanti's performance and that until such time as performance is restored first-class accommodation should be declassified.
3. That the Board notes with concern that, whilst TfN recognises the benefits of the proposed ECML timetable for December 2024, there are also a number of communities where there are negative impacts on passengers and businesses, particularly in Northumberland and the North East.
4. That following receipt of additional assurances, on infrastructure commitments and future service development, on balance Board confirms its acceptance of the ECML timetable change planned for December 2024.

8. Governance Update

- 8.1 Members received the report from the Head of Legal who then outlined the key parts of the report.

Resolved:

- 1) That Board approves the extension of Kevin Brady's term of office as an Independent Member of Audit and Governance Committee from 31 March 2024 until 30 September 2024.
- 2) That Board approves the extension of Graham Bell's term of office as an Independent Member of Audit and Governance Committee from September 2021 until 30 April 2025.
- 3) That Board approves the appointment of Stuart Green as an Independent Member of Audit and Governance Committee with effect from 1 October 2024.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

20 March 2024
11am
Leeds Hilton City