

Meeting: Rail North Committee
Subject: Rail North Partnership Operational Update
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Sponsor: Martin Tugwell, Chief Executive
Meeting Date: Monday, 15 July 2024

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. There will be update presentations from London Northern Eastern Railway (LNER), Avanti West Coast (Avanti), Northern and TransPennine Trains (TPT) at the meeting. The report also includes a recommended response to an industry consultation on recent Open Access applications.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) notes the information in the report and supports the actions that Rail North Partnership (RNP) is taking to ensure operators focus on delivering the services passengers need.
 - b) Notes the updates from train operators and invites LNER to provide a business update and take questions from the Committee.
 - c) Agrees to resubmit its advice to the Secretary of State in respect of the future of the West Coast operator.
 - d) Agrees, subject to amendments made by the Committee, the response to the Open Access applications (Appendix 7)

3. Overview:

- 3.1 Operational performance remains mixed - TPT has significantly reduced cancellation levels and is on track with the recovery plan facilitating restoration of service frequencies at the December 2024 timetable change. Northern is still suffering higher levels of cancellations with particular challenges in the North West and on Sundays. RNP is having further discussions with Northern as to alternative approaches to addressing these issues and developing robust mitigation plans.
- 3.2 Performance continues to be impacted by industry-wide issues including industrial relations (including ongoing and potential future strikes) and higher than average levels of sickness. ASLEF took national action from 6 to 11 May, which included a ban on overtime/rest day working (RDW), leading to staff shortages and thus cancellations. ASLEF also held strikes on Northern and TPT on 9 May, when neither operator ran services. Operators continue to focus on reducing the training backlog, however progress in this regard is affected by industrial action.
- 3.3 RNP is working with TPT and Northern to enable the operators to take appropriate actions for their respective businesses and to ensure there are operational performance recovery plans to meet their contractual targets.

3.4 Updates for other operators serving the North (not covered by the Rail North Partnership Agreement) are included in Appendices 1-6. As part of a rolling programme of engagement with the Committee, LNER will present a business update at this meeting.

4. **Avanti West Coast Performance Update**

4.1 The Committee has highlighted the concern of partners from across the North that the level of service provided by Avanti has been unacceptable for too long. The Managing Director of Avanti attended meetings on 14 November 2023 and 21 February 2024. In March 2024, Avanti attended the TfN Board and following a robust discussion, the Board agreed to write to the Secretary of State advising that Avanti's contract should be terminated, and the operation transferred to the Government's Operator of Last Resort. DfT responded on 7 June to say that due to the calling of the election a substantive response was not possible and inviting TfN to re-submit its letter after 4 July.

4.2 The TfN Board on 21 March 2024 heard that Avanti's median PPM score between 6 January and 24 February 2024 was 68.6%. As the update in Appendix 1 indicates, Avanti's average PPM score for the 12 weeks from 1 April 2024 was 66.5% with one period reaching 69.1%. Whilst this does not indicate any improvement on the previous position, Avanti has highlighted a reduction in the proportion of cancellations caused by the operator on itself by 45% with Network Rail responsible for 64% of delays reflecting an increase in infrastructure failures. Avanti will be present at the meeting to provide a further update and take questions.

4.3 Given the continuing under performance of operations on the West Coast Main Line there is no reason why the Committee should change its position. Accordingly, it is recommended the letter to the Secretary of State is re-submitted. However, in so doing it is also recommended that reference is made to the increased level of infrastructure failures on the West Coast Main Line and the need for urgent action on the route infrastructure alongside the need to resolve issues with Avanti itself.

5. **Open Access Applications**

5.1 Recently, several proposals for new services (and specifically the track access rights needed) have emerged, in part prompted by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) inviting companies to make submissions. Earlier in the year Grand Union was granted access rights to run a small number of services from Stirling to Euston via the West Coast Main Line. Hull Trains has put forward proposals for a new Sheffield to London via Retford on the East Coast Main Line. In addition, London North Western Railway (a contracted rather than 'open access' operator) is proposing extending London-Crewe services to Manchester Victoria and extending services from Stoke-on-Trent to Manchester Airport.

There are two live applications particularly relevant to the North where TfN proposes to respond to an industry consultation:

- Lumo – Rochdale to London Euston services
- Virgin Trains – four new service groups between London Euston and points further north including
 - Preston/Rochdale via Manchester Piccadilly and through Central Manchester
 - Liverpool Lime Street via Runcorn
 - Glasgow Central via Golborne, Preston, and Carlisle.

5.2 It is recognised that open access services can be beneficial to the overall rail market by driving growth through competition and being able to provide direct services to new destinations. Observation of Hull Trains, Grand Central (serving

Bradford and Sunderland) and Lumo on the ECML suggest that Open Access services do have the ability to grow the market and improve the customer offer.

5.3 However, as this Committee is all too aware, performance on the West Coast Main Line is extremely challenging and lacks operational resilience. Whilst on the East Coast Main Line, the need to postpone the proposed timetable change reflects the fact that demand for paths bid for through the industry processes outstrips available capacity. It should be noted that notwithstanding the significant investment in infrastructure committed to as part of the new Control Period, it is widely accepted across the industry that this is insufficient to maintain standards.

5.4 As things stand, there is not enough clarity that the additional direct services to London under consideration can be accommodated without detrimental impact on performance and/or realisation of the benefits of existing investment programmes. In addition, it should be noted that the use of capacity on the network to support additional services to/from London makes it harder to improve pan-regional services as envisaged in the Strategic Transport Plan. A significant contributory factor here is that the objectives used by the ORR to consider access requests are not necessarily aligned with the evidence-based outcomes set out in the Strategic Transport Plan.

5.5 The draft response recommends that applications are put on hold until other issues are resolved. This conclusion is based on a number of factors including:

- The North suffers from continued issues of poorer rail performance in relation to other parts of the country, driven in part by significant bottlenecks and congested infrastructure (including Central Manchester, the West Coast Main Line more generally, Leeds Station (the 3rd biggest sources of delays on the entire UK network) and the East Coast Main Line);
- There are specific Task Forces leading work to tackle congestion and develop future timetables in Central Manchester and on the East Coast Main Line. They must be allowed to complete their advice and establish a baseline for future services before further Open Access is considered;
- In the case of services across Manchester, TfN has reluctantly accepted a short-term reduction in services ahead of additional infrastructure being delivered and the priority must be the restoration of lost services ahead of new services;
- The government is investing £11.5bn in the TransPennine Route Upgrade scheme as an enabler for more significant investment in Northern Powerhouse Rail. A concept timetable is under development that seeks to maximise the benefits of this investment and it's important that this work is completed to determine what, if any, further paths are available;
- There are examples where incumbent operators do not have firm track access rights for services that are established and form part of the baseline for future service enhancements. It is important that these issues are resolved ahead of the consideration of further Open Access.

5.6 A draft response to the Lumo and Virgin Trains applications is set out in Appendix 7, which would also be used as the basis for any further consultations relating to similar congested parts of the network.

6. TransPennine Trains

6.1 TPT remains on track to deliver its recovery plan as outlined at previous meetings, including reinstating some previously withdrawn services in June, with all services restored by December 2024. TPT's work to eliminate its driver-training backlog means that it is on track to achieve 100% competence for the driver establishment needed to run the December 2024 timetable. This will mean

driver training will only be required to maintain route and traction knowledge, for new drivers, or for TRU diversions.

- 6.2 On 2 June 2024, the summer timetable for the railway was introduced. TPT introduced a number of services uplifts, increasing frequency and connectivity on parts of the network:

West Coast Main Line:

- Uplifting from 34 to 40 trains per day – a return to the full timetable as run before TPT’s agreed step-down in December 2023 – providing connectivity improvements for Manchester, Liverpool, Lancashire, Cumbria, and Scotland.

South TransPennine route:

- Additional service between Cleethorpes – Doncaster on Saturday evenings.

North TransPennine route:

- Additional evening services between Liverpool – Manchester/Manchester Airport,
- Additional weekend services (operating June – October) between York – Scarborough.

- 6.3 The December 2024 timetable is going through the standard industry readiness process and will see restoration of all TPT North TransPennine route services that were stepped back at the December 2023 timetable change. This will see 4 express services per hour Manchester–Leeds and the reinstatement of the express Hull–Liverpool service. This timetable will also see departures from Leeds for Manchester Victoria and from Manchester Victoria to Leeds run to a 15-minute clockface timetable. Manchester Piccadilly will also have 1 train per hour to Huddersfield with at least every other service extended to York via Wakefield, plus a peak-time-only train to Huddersfield calling all stations.

The implications of the East Coast Main Line timetable challenges, for TPT and other operators, will be dealt with in detail as a separate agenda item.

- 6.4 A jointly funded project between TPT and Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) has seen works take place over the spring to install a Changing Places facility at Stalybridge station. TPT and MDUK are evaluating other stations where they could partner to install Changing Places facilities, with a feasibility study already underway at Cleethorpes station.

New accessible seating has been installed at Hull Paragon Interchange. The new seats are designed to meet multiple accessibility requirements, including different heights to make them easier to stand from, better back support, and some seats without armrests to facilitate transfers from a wheelchair.

- 6.5 TPT have been working with TfN members to evaluate options for additional or strengthened services to support key events. This has included an additional service between Manchester and Liverpool to support an Olivia Rodrigo concert at the Co-op Live arena - while the concert was cancelled, the train still ran. Service strengthening of the last service of the day through Middlesbrough has also been arranged to support travel following a Take That concert.

- 6.6 TPT has continued its programme of ambience improvements at Hull Paragon Interchange with the installation of a dozen evergreen trees throughout the concourse. The installation has been warmly welcomed by customers and Hull City Council and follows other improvements such as the mural painted on the walls at the entrance to the Interchange.

- 6.7 TPT has opened its application process for its apprenticeship scheme for this year. Eight apprenticeship positions are available in areas including customer experience, performance, service planning, safety, retailing and resourcing.

Applications closed on 31 May. Interviews with shortlisted applicants will be held over the summer, with the appointed apprentices starting with TPT in September.

TPT has also joined forces with LNER, Northern and Southeastern for Future Labs – a scheme designed to accelerate ideas that address common and emerging issues for the sector. Successful applicants will gain access to industry data and resources as well as mentors and subject matter experts working for the train operators to bring their products and services to life.

- 6.8 TPT's trial of a new catering offer for customers on the West Coast Main Line, which sources produce from suppliers along the route, has been well received by customers. The West Coast Kitchen features two customer hosts on board each service, with one dedicated to First Class. Passengers in First Class receive an enhanced service, including hot meals, snacks, and alcohol. In Standard Class, customers have three trolley services throughout the full journey, providing more opportunities to order food and drink. An additional 30 jobs have been created throughout the route as a result of this service development. Menus, which offer a range of meals, will rotate frequently, providing variety for frequent travellers.

7. Northern

- 7.1 Northern continues with its action plan to reduce cancellation rates due to train crew unavailability, driven by root causes of sickness absence, skills, and Sundays. When the ASLEF RDW agreement has been in place, and in the absence of industrial action, Northern has been able to expedite progress through their driver training workbank (skills).

However, cancellation rates continue to be a concern, and are particularly acute in the North-West and on Sundays, which remain outside of the working week for drivers in that region and for conductors across Northern. While not a decision taken lightly, Northern continues to pre-cancel services (p-coding) in the North-West to give customers as much notice as possible for travel planning, when traincrew availability is challenging. RNP will continue to monitor progress closely. Services have also been impacted by weather related infrastructure issues including landslips, leading to temporary line closures (e.g., Baildon and Pontefract) and in one case leading to a derailment in Cumbria.

- 7.2 Preparations for the June 24 timetable change were robust, including some excellent collaboration with the Trades Unions. The initial bedding in of the new timetable has been successful. It includes provision for the introduction of the Northumberland Line and the cascade of Class 323 trains from West Midlands Trains to reinstate previously lost capacity. It also introduced a new Saturday service between Manchester and Ribbleshead 'Yorkshire Dales Explorer'. Following the deferral of ECML timetable structure changes, Northern is working on a June timetable rollover for the December 24 timetable with the addition of the planned partial remapping of Leeds – Huddersfield local services. Work is underway to develop plans for 2025 service changes.
- 7.3 Tricia Williams succeeded Nick Donovan as Managing Director on 6 May 2024. Matt Rice has also joined Northern as Chief Operating Officer. Tricia will be attending the committee and will give an update on Northern's performance.
- 7.4 Underlying demand growth has been stable at around 3%; constrained in late 2023-24 by strikes, a challenging economic backdrop and weak weather conditions. Moving into 2024-25, the economic landscape is performing slightly ahead of expectations and Period 2 delivered the first period of strong weather conditions, which collectively supported stronger leisure growth. In contrast, although improving in late 2023-24, service delivery was challenging in Period 2 suppressing demand growth.

Looking ahead, the potential for improved weather as we move into summer should combine with commercial levers such as marketing, advance purchase,

and revenue protection to drive growth, but strikes and wider service delivery challenges remain as headwinds.

- 7.5 To meet the Department for Transport's aspirations for accelerated decarbonisation, Northern restarted the procurement process for its new train fleet with a revised specification, which includes the option of battery powered trains in the future. The revised contract notice was issued in May and outlines three different types of stock, the quantities, phasing, and timescales involved and details of the fleet it will replace. It is anticipated that the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) will be issued to market later this year.
- 7.6 Northern's apprenticeship offering received an overall 'good' rating in its first OFSTED inspection earlier this year. A significant result with only 5% of new providers achieving this on first inspection. The quality of education provided, and the behaviour, attitudes, and apprenticeships were rated as Outstanding. It was noted that very high expectations for work behaviors and attitudes are set for apprentices and in turn, they are committed to the training while demonstrating very high standards of professional behaviors.
- 7.7 On 8 June Northern launched its year-round Yorkshire Dales Explorer service, running 2 trains every Saturday Manchester-Ribblehead. The service connects Rochdale, Manchester, Bolton and Blackburn with Hellifield on the Bentham line and Ribbleshead on the Settle & Carlisle line. It offers opportunities for walkers and cyclists to visit the Dales from Greater Manchester. Despite limited publicity due to the general election, around 150 passengers joined the first northbound service, with around 120 on the return journey. The next Saturday around 100 joined the first service and 80 the second return service. RNP is working with Yorkshire Dales National Park and York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority and Lancashire Council to promote local activities and local accommodation, food, and drink.

8. TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU)

- 8.1 Members of the Committee and TfN Board received a briefing on progress with TRU from the programme executive team. TRU is in a period of sustained disruptive construction works. In April and May this was focussed around the Morley area, to complete track and signalling upgrades between Dewsbury and Leeds. This is followed by weekend disruption between Slaithwaite and Deighton until 10 June, then a further 4 consecutive 5-day midweek blockades at Morley (24 June-20 July). In September, Castleton Bridge will be blocked for 18 days (6-24 Sept) requiring all Calder Valley services to run via the Diggle route.
- 8.2 TPT is progressing well through the various DfT governance stages in preparation of issuing their Invitation to Negotiate documentation to market for the rolling stock.

9. Corporate Considerations:

Financial Implications

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

Resource Implications

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

Legal Implications

- 9.3 Any legal implications are contained within this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

- 9.4 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

- 9.5 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 managing private car vehicle mileage.

Equality and Diversity

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

10. Appendices:

- 10.1 Appendices 1 – 6: Operator Updates
10.2 Appendices 7: Draft Open Access Consultation response

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used:

ASLEF	The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ASOS	Action Short of Strike
DOHL	Department for Transport OLR Holdings Ltd
ECML	East Coast Mainline
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ITN	Invitation to Negotiate
MDUK	Muscular Dystrophy UK
NTL	Northern Trains Ltd or ("Northern")
OFSTED	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
ORR	Office of Rail and Road
PPM	Public Performance Measure
RDW	Rest Day Working
RNP	Rail North Partnership
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
TfW	Transport for Wales Rail-Trafnidiaeth Cymru
TPT	TransPennine Trains Ltd or ("TransPennine Express")
TRU	TransPennine Route Upgrade

Appendix 1: Avanti West Coast (AWC) Update

- A1.1 In line with its plan, and as mentioned at previous meetings, AWC has taken steps to improve the availability of traincrew, working proactively with unions to improve rosters and the use of rest day working to more effectively allocate train driver resources in line with customer need as well as progress training on new trains.
- A1.2 There has been a reduction in AWC responsible cancellations in the last 12 weeks by 45% compared to the preceding 12 weeks. AWC has managed the initial introduction of its Evero fleet successfully and is increasing the number of its productive drivers thanks to its continuing driver recruitment and training. We do still have resilience issues during peak holiday periods which is the same as other operators.
- A1.3 In the 12 weeks from April 1, 2024, AWC was responsible for 22% of the delays to its services, with Network Rail responsible for 64% and other operators responsible for 14%. Overall PPM – the measure of what percentage of trains arrived at destination within 10 minutes of schedule, irrespective of the causation of delays and cancellations – was at 69.1%, 68.2% and 62.2% in each of the

four-week periods following April 1. The annual average PPM for the 12 months up to June 22 was 67.5%

- A1.4 Over the last few months, there has been several significant infrastructure challenges impacting reliability and punctuality. AWC has focussed on giving customers timely and helpful information and working with Network Rail to recover services as quickly as possible. AWC is part of new industry collaborations that create innovative solutions to persistent problems, for example this has improved 'right time starts' by 8% from Manchester Piccadilly.
- A1.5 In the near future, AWC plans to start the roll out of its new £350m Hitachi trains. These bi-mode and electric trains will reduce carbon emissions by over two-thirds in comparison with the diesel Voyager fleet that they are replacing. Serving the Midlands, Chester, and North Wales routes, they will provide more seats, improved comfort, and a range of improved accessibility features. The introduction of the new fleet requires 2,500 training days and takes drivers away from passenger services for around two weeks at a time. AWC is recruiting around 70 trainee or qualified drivers for each of the next few years.
- A1.6 AWC continues to introduce new products to cater for evolving travel patterns and demand, including the extension of its Superfare ticket. From the end of April, customers travelling from the Lake District are able to take advantage of new tickets from London to Oxenholme (£26), Penrith (£26) and Carlisle (£28). Passengers travelling between Milton Keynes and Manchester (£18) and Preston and Glasgow (£12) now also have the choice of a Superfare ticket.

Appendix 2: CrossCountry (XC) Update

- A2.1 Performance in terms of cancellations and punctuality has stabilised, and XC has initiatives in place to drive further improvement, working closely with Network Rail.
- A2.2 XC is also looking to improve customer experience through deploying additional Voyager units to strengthen trains over the summer period from June, along with targeted changes to calls at locations such as Wakefield and Chesterfield.
- A2.3 This precedes introduction of its additional Newcastle-Reading services, planned from May 2025 – XC is working through the impact of the East Coast timetable change deferral on this planned service, but given the pressures on the ECML and the difficulties of accommodating existing demand, an additional service looks unlikely.
- A2.4 Longer term, XC is looking forward to its upcoming fleet refurbishment – this is expected to start in Q4 2024/5.
- A2.5 Underlying XC's plans is significant risk around the challenging Industrial Relations climate, including ongoing discussions over pay and its upcoming Rest Day Working agreement renewal.

Appendix 3: East Midlands Railway (EMR) Update

- A3.1 EMR have announced the start of a £60m programme to refurbish its fleet of Class 360, Class 158, and Class 170 trains. Together with the introduction of the new Aurora Intercity trains, this will mean that all EMR's trains will either be replaced with new trains or refurbished.
- A3.2 Relevant to the region is EMR's Class 158 fleet, which will receive new seat covers and foams, an interior refresh and CCTV. Also operating in the North is EMR's Class 170 fleet, which has come to EMR from different operators and will be upgraded to provide a consistent customer experience across the fleet. All trains

will receive new seat foams and covers, an extensive refresh as well as new passenger information systems and CCTV.

- A3.3 EMR's performance in March and April was strong, with 78.8% T-3 performance (the percentage of trains arriving within three minutes of their schedule at each calling point) and 97.7% T-15 performance (as before, within 15 minutes). EMR had a network cancellation rate of 2.3% and a short formation rate of 1.16%.
- A3.4 From the June 2024 timetable change, EMR will be running longer trains on some of their trains on Saturdays and Sundays on the Liverpool–Nottingham–Norwich route.

Appendix 4: Lumo Update

- A4.1 While punctuality figures for March and April were slightly below target, Lumo's cancellations were far lower than expected. Recent performance on Lumo was driven by a series of external infrastructure issues with overhead lines and points, that meant that parts of the East Coast Main Line were closed temporarily due to damage. There were also a number of other operator train failures causing delays, as well as external animal incursion and a fatality during this period.
- A4.2 Lumo's passenger numbers remain strong, and it has recently announced an overall satisfaction rating of 96% by its customers. This comes along with the news that there has been a 18% reduction in complaints year on year despite 11% growth of overall passenger numbers. The complaints handling improvement has also been reflected by a 60% reduction in escalated complaints to the Rail Ombudsman compared to last year.
- A4.3 In recent weeks the company announced interest in running some of its services through to Glasgow. Full details of this is to be confirmed, such as route, paths, and timings. Lumo is working with Transport Scotland and Network Rail to assess the feasibility of operation.
- A4.4 FirstGroup has submitted the first phase of an application for a new open access rail service between Rochdale and London under the Lumo brand. The proposed service would run 6 return trains between London Euston and Rochdale via Manchester calling at Warrington Bank Quay, Newton le Willows, Eccles, and Manchester Victoria. If the proposal is approved, it would restore Rochdale's direct link to London for the first time since 2000. All of the trains on this new route would be electric and battery powered, and the service would be operated by brand new trains built in the UK.

The station at Eccles provides connectivity for other parts of Salford, including MediaCity via the nearby interchange with Metrolink, and services to Newton-le-Willows will deliver greater rail connectivity for St Helens. Lumo estimates that this new service would provide 1.6m people in the North West with "a convenient and competitively priced direct rail service to London from stations that are more local to them, helping to stimulate a shift in transport mode from coach and car travel to rail."

The application has been submitted to the regulator, ORR, and will now go through a period of consultation. If approved the service could commence from 2027.

Appendix 5: Hull Trains Update

- A5.1 At the end of the last year, Hull Trains achieved internal delay and cancellation targets, although Network Rail failed delay minute targets. The start of this year has seen a positive start with all targets being achieved by both Hull Trains and

Network Rail and several days of 100% PPM running last period. Key causes of delay remain external factors to Hull Trains such as infrastructure faults, trespass, and faults on other operators' trains. Hull Trains' efforts to reduce delays were recognised as it won the industry Golden Whistle award for 'Minimising Delay Minutes', along with sister company Lumo.

- A5.2 The company's application to the Office of Rail and Road for a new open access rail service between Sheffield and London is now awaiting a decision from the regulator.
- A5.3 Recent customer satisfaction results for the operator revealed a 96% Overall Customer Satisfaction level, which under the former National Rail Passenger Survey would have been an industry-leading score. Full-year complaints figures were also down 24% year-on-year, and the company dealt with these 60% faster than the previous year, all testament to the hard work and continued customer focus of their team.

Appendix 6: LNER Update

- A6.1 Performance has remained consistent in Periods 1 and 2. LNER punctuality at all stations was around 60%. Time to 3 was 76%, Time to 15 slightly decreased from 95%, in Period 1, to 93% in Period 2.
- A6.2 In June 2024 LNER made changes to its West Yorkshire Sunday timetable. LNER introduced two West Yorkshire services and strengthened two services in June 2024, seeing a further 1,500 seats added on Sundays. The timetable uplift on Sunday makes LNER's Anglo-Scot services less crowded – and therefore improves the customer travel experience for customers across its route.
- A6.3 The transformational timetable planned for December 2024 has been deferred to either May or December 2025. LNER is committed to its introduction, delivering faster and more frequent services on the East Coast Main Line. Delivering the transformational timetable will deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits as well as generating industry revenue (circa. £60m) that can support further enhancements that will benefit rail users and communities in the north. LNER will continue to work with industry partners to ensure that the transformational timetable is delivered.
- A6.4 In December, LNER will withdraw early-morning and late-night extensions to Glasgow, Stirling, and Sunderland due to low customer numbers. LNER will introduce an interim 2 hourly York and Newcastle shuttle service Monday-Friday. The service has been introduced to ensure that the North East and North Yorkshire retain good connectivity until the transformational timetable is introduced in either May or December 2025.
- A6.5 Assistance was requested on and off trains at LNER's managed stations more than 250,000 times over the past year – the highest number to date. LNER is committed to providing passenger assistance to anyone who requires it, whether they book the service in advance or upon arrival at one of its eleven managed stations, or at London King's Cross and Edinburgh Waverley stations. Between April 2023 and the end of March 2024, LNER received over 252,000 requests with teams across the route assisting many thousands of customers during their journeys.
- A6.6 Every LNER managed station is now safer thanks to the installation of tactile surfacing at platform edges. More than 600,000 studs have been installed across platforms over the past 2 years and work has just been completed on the project introducing and enhancing the surfacing across 11 stations managed by LNER.

- A6.7 LNER's latest accessibility innovation, a full integration of British Sign Language (BSL) across its customer information screens, entered a trial period last December, with the aim of providing parity of information for deaf customers who use BSL. Following a successful trial, this is now being implemented across most of LNER's managed stations.
- A6.8 LNER customers are now able to find the latest journey updates, destination inspiration and more while they are travelling onboard, with the launch of a new one-stop digital information service. By scanning a QR code on the seat, customers can self-serve and have access to a variety of information. This includes the latest on their journey and connecting services, the wider rail network, facilities at their destination station, and ideas on attractions and places they could visit when they get there.
- A6.9 LNER has joined forces with 3 other train operators on a Dragons' Den-style scheme to support innovation in the rail industry. LNER, Northern, Southeastern and TPT are looking for cutting-edge technology startups to apply to Future Labs – a scheme designed to accelerate ideas that address common and emerging issues for the sector. Successful applicants will gain access to industry data and resources as well as mentors and subject matter experts working for the train operators to bring their products and services to life. They will be able to apply, test and demonstrate their ideas in real-world environments over a 12-week period.

Appendix 7.

Draft Open Access Consultation Response