
Meeting: Rail North Committee
Subject: Rail North Partnership Operational Update - Supplemental
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Sponsor: Martin Tugwell, Chief Executive
Meeting Date: Wednesday, 20 November 2024

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To update the Committee on operational rail matters, including performance which were not included within the Rail North Partnership Operational Update report that was issued to Committee on Tuesday 12 November.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes the updates from train operators.

3. Avanti West Coast (AWC) update

- 3.1 Avanti West Coast (AWC) has made positive strides in performance. In the four-week period covering 15 September to 13 October, AWC produced some of its best scores for over a year. Most notably, cancellations and significantly late trains and customer net advocacy scores (provided by AWC passengers) were respectively their lowest, and highest, for a year. Cancellations for which AWC is responsible were below 2%.
- 3.2 AWC is introducing more services between London and Birmingham, and Liverpool and Chester in the December timetable and includes an additional 07.00 Manchester to Euston weekday service, with a headline end-to-end journey time of less than two hours.
- 3.3 On 11 November, AWC's £350 million investment in new trains reached an important milestone with the launch of the first fully electric Evero service between London and Liverpool. This provides an additional weekday service in each direction, supplementing the existing hourly service, with further increases planned next month (to 30 additional services per week) and then in May 2025.
- 3.4 In response to stakeholder comments on staffing levels, ticket office availability and revenue protection at both Manchester Piccadilly and Stockport stations, AWC has written to both the Mayor and local MP detailing compliant levels of coverage, as well as confirmation of its on-going recruitment plans.
- 3.5 AWC continues to work with Network Rail (NR) to improve operational delivery, including to support NR's Euston station plan, to support improvements in both customer experience and infrastructure reliability and resilience. This includes collaborating to manage autumn and winter readiness, focusing on response to extreme weather events, flooding and fleet preparedness. In recognition of the importance of the festive period, including weekend travel to Christmas markets, to the local economy, AWC's priority is to maintain a full train plan, with no short-term timetable reductions planned over the Christmas period.
- 3.6 AWC is monitoring reservations daily on weekends leading up to Christmas and has prioritised 11-car trains into Manchester on the Saturdays before Christmas, focusing particular on the trains calling at Macclesfield – representing a key market flow. Weekly assurance review meetings have commenced for each

weekend during the market period and run up to Christmas, working with Network Rail and other train operators (TOC's) around Christmas readiness.

- 3.7 Over the festive period AWC's control team will handle short-notice ticket acceptance requests, including from other TOCs, under existing protocols. AWC is ready to implement or assist with station crowd control measures to support customer handling and the flow of passengers. The operator is working on the provision of standby coaches, and extra AWC event hosts will be deployed to support where additional events such as football matches may also have an impact on passenger numbers during the Christmas market period. AWC will keep stakeholders informed of any significant issues likely to impact on services throughout the coming weeks.

4. Hull Trains update

- 4.1 Hull Trains' performance for the last quarter has been negatively affected by several external factors, notably trespass, death by suicide, cable theft and signalling faults. While delays caused by itself have been minimal, the company is working closely with industry partners to support initiatives tackling key areas of concern.
- 4.2 In preparation for the festive period Hull Trains will include additional capacity on some services, particularly while engineering works takes place on the Midland Mainline.
- 4.3 In November, Hull Trains confirmed that it would be retaining its Standard Class catering offer, safeguarding 12 jobs permanently at the organisation following an initial 12-month trial. The company has continued to use local suppliers for its onboard offer and is building on this with new snack boxes on board.
- 4.4 In late October Hull Trains published a report in partnership with the Purpose Coalition demonstrating the significant social value of the operator's contribution to communities along the route since its inception, demonstrated by events such as the facilitation of a group from Communitia mental health charity in Selby to enjoy an event onboard between Selby and London ahead of meeting their MP and a beach clean event at Bridlington undertaken by colleagues, and support by Hull Trains managers at a Network Rail careers event in York, amongst several other events.
- 4.5 The company is awaiting a response from the Office of Rail and Road with regards to its bid to operate services from Sheffield to London King's Cross via Woodhouse, Worksop and Retford. It has received strong levels of support for the venture and is hoping for a response in the near future.

5. Lumo update

- 5.1 Performance figures for Lumo have been largely in line with expectations for the last quarter, with infrastructure failures such as overhead line and points problems, as well as external factors, including bird strikes and other animal incursions on the railway causing both delays and damage to trains.
- 5.2 In preparation for the festive period, the operator has employed a number of luggage helpers to assist with safe, on time departures at key stations.
- 5.3 Lumo recently shared data on positive growth for its services to and from Morpeth with support from the South East Northumberland Rail User Group (SENUG) and Northumberland County Council, showing how it has helped to develop the service offer and attract new business to the railway at this station.
- 5.4 Lumo has been working alongside partners in Newcastle as part of a bid for the city to become the most accessible city in Europe. The 2025 Community Rail

Network Awards are being hosted in Newcastle with Lumo as headline partner and which will coincide with Railway 200 activities.

- 5.5 The operator has also outlined its aspiration to operate a new route from Rochdale to London Euston via Manchester Victoria, Eccles, Newton-le-Willows and Warrington Bank Quay and is awaiting a response from the Office of Rail and Road. It is also in discussions with Network Rail and Transport Scotland about the possibility of extending some services through to Glasgow, once a route is confirmed.

6 CrossCountry Trains (XC) update

- 6.1 XC recently exited its temporary timetable, having exceeded the targets agreed with the Department for Transport both for reducing on-the-day cancellations and tackling the backlog of outstanding driver training.
- 6.2 XC has graduated 18 drivers to 'productive' status and increased its pool of trainee drivers by 19%. Over time, this will help increase productivity across the network, with more drivers now having the knowledge and experience to cover a greater range of routes.
- 6.3 Work to refurbish XC's Class 170 'Turbostar' units has begun. From 15 December, XC is phasing out First Class on Class 170s to provide more standard-class seating capacity on inter-regional routes. The changes to the Class 170 units follow the introduction of the three extra 'Voyager' units which entered service in June, providing long-distance customers with an extra 12,000 seats a week. The additional trains provided much-needed capacity on XC's busiest routes from the North East to the Southwest and the South Coast. Next summer XC will introduce nine new Voyager trains, which will significantly help reduce overcrowding and improve the onboard experience for our passengers.
- 6.4 On 16 December, XC will launch a new Cardiff to Edinburgh service, its first to join the two capitals.
- 6.5 The Christmas period will see significant planned engineering work across the network, leading to closures and journey changes up and down the country. XC is warning passengers travelling over Christmas that they could be impacted not only by work taking place on its routes but by work elsewhere, which will divert more passengers than usual onto XC services.
- 6.6 Given leave requests over the festive period, XC expects to see some planned short-term timetabling changes. XC's rostering team will monitor the situation daily to keep these to a minimum. XC has begun proactively encouraging customers to plan well ahead and, on busier routes, to expect some overcrowding.

7. LNER update

- 7.1 In period 7 (15 September-12 October) 2,157,582 journeys were made on LNER services, up from 1,957,306 for the same period last year.
- 7.2 In period 7 cancellations (all causes) was 4.7%, while LNER-only (TOC-on-self) cancellations were 0.5%. Trains arriving within 3 minutes of the timetabled time (T-3) performance was 73%, with T-15 at 93%.
- 7.3 LNER is actively preparing for the festive period, holding a readiness review and engaging with Network Rail and other operators in preparation of the Midland Mainline closure (21-29 December).
- 7.4 LNER is working with industry colleagues to organise a Rail Staff Carol Service (North), which members of the Committee are invited to attend, at the National Railway Museum in York on Wednesday, 11 December at 1300.

8. Corporate Considerations

8.1 Financial Implications

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

8.2 Resource Implications

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

8.3 Legal Implications

No legal implications are contained with this report.

8.4 Risk Management and Key Issues

Transport for the North has two relevant corporate risks which are being actively managed - 309 'viability of future train services and future investment decisions' and 311 'future timetables.'

8.5 Environmental Implications

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.

8.6 Equality and Diversity

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

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (if applicable)

Please include any technical abbreviations and acronyms used in the report in this section. (Please see examples below.) This will provide an easy reference point for the reader for any abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report.

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| a) TPE | TransPennine Express |
| b) NPR | Northern Powerhouse Rail |
| c) NTC | Northern Transport Charter |