TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH

Meeting:	Rail North Committee
Subject:	Reliability & Resilience Delivery Plan
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Meeting Date:	Tuesday 15 November 2022

1. Purpose of the Report:

1.1 The Reliability & Resilience Delivery Plan examines how poor performance of the passenger train operators who run services within Transport for the North's geography is one of the major reasons why the North's railway network can be seen as requiring improvement in comparison with the rest of the country. This report summarises work undertaken by Transport for the North to develop a *Reliability & Resilience Delivery Plan,* setting out short-term infrastructure enhancements to improve the resilience of the network.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 Transport for the North has worked with staff from Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies to identify a set of 121 small and medium-sized interventions which could be progressed individually, but which together would make a significant difference to rail reliability in the North.

The Rail North Committee is therefore recommended to:

a) Note the work that has been undertaken by Transport for the North on small-medium infrastructure schemes;
b) Endorse the approach to improving reliability set out in this paper; and
c) Endorse seeking devolved funding from Government, potentially through Network Rail, to address the resilience and reliability of the network as outlined in this report.

3. Main Issues:

Background

3.1 Since the problems associated with the May 2018 timetable change, the performance and reliability of train services has become a key focus of stakeholder concern. This has been reinforced by the recent work of the Manchester Task Force, which has highlighted how poor train performance can undermine the other objectives of the industry (e.g. providing connectivity and capacity, and supporting economic growth). However, the current railway long-term planning system operates in a way which is not conducive to performance issues being given high priority, for the following reasons:

- Network Rail's strategic planning process has been generally focussed upon capacity improvements (on a "predict and provide" basis), with the elements of reliability and resilience as a supporting consideration;

- Network Rail's renewals programme renews assets like-for-like (in modern form) in most instances, with little upgrading to replace like with better;

- Relatively small, individual interventions that would improve reliability and/or resilience fall through the gaps, and are not picked up through the renewals process; and

- The timescales through the strategic planning process are extremely lengthy, and improvement interventions can take upwards of four years to be delivered even when there is a strong case.

3.2 Prior to the pandemic, performance had been identified as a key "levelling up" issue. In the last quarter before coronavirus struck (2019-20 Q4), all but one of the 8 Train Operating Companies (TOCs) which operate significantly in the North (i.e. excluding Merseyrail) had a lower "on time" percentage than all but one of the 15 TOCs which largely operate outside Transport for the North's geography. There was therefore very little overlap, with Northern TOCs being almost uniformly the worst-performing.[1] During the pandemic, train performance improved significantly (due to fewer train and passengers), but in early 2022 there were signs of a reversion to the pre-covid situation, with the 7 TOCs whose performance deteriorated the most in the year to March 2022 (including Northern and TransPennine Express) all running services in the North.[2]

3.3 Transport for the North's research into the issue of poor performance has revealed a number of additional points:

There is a strong correlation between train performance and customer satisfaction. Data for Autumn 2021 showed that 7 TOCs (including Northern and TransPennine Express) experienced an "on time" percentage below 70% across the period, but none of those TOCs generated a customer satisfaction score (as measured by Transport Focus) higher than 89%, whereas 8 higher-performing TOCs did. As customer satisfaction will be key to encouraging passengers back to rail and achieving modal shift in future, performance is thus a key issue; and

There are many causes of poor train performance and train delays generally. The statistics produced by Network Rail classify the original causes of delays in to 11 categories, but no single category accounts for more than about one-sixth of delay minutes. The top three categories for Northern and TransPennine Express combined (during 2019 to 2022) were vehicle problems (17.7%), failure of signalling and other "non-track" assets (12.5%) and issues (such as trespass and accidents at bridges) classed as originating externally (10.8%).

3.4 Accordingly, with no single over-riding cause of delay, Transport for the North has taken the view that pursuing many relatively small schemes intended to address specific local or tactical issues would make a substantial difference for performance. This is not a substitute for the more substantial investment needed in congestion hotspots (such as Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and the East Coast Main Line) but can be delivered generally more quickly. With this in mind, Transport for the North has worked with staff from the TOCs, Freight Operating Companies (FOCs) and Network Rail to generate and prioritise a list of such schemes.

3.5 The list included in the draft *Reliability & Resilience Delivery Plan* comprises 121 specific interventions which would improve performance. These are spread around Transport for the North's geography, with 46 in the North West, 42 in Yorkshire & the Humber, 9 in the North East and 9 outside of the North (as they would benefit performance in the North). Meanwhile, the interventions have been categorised into 18 types of improvement, with the most common including enhancements to platform layouts or equipment (31), linespeed increases (26), improvements to signalling and interlocking (26), enhancements to station

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[1] Office of Rail and Road, *Passenger Rail Performance: 2019-20 Quarter 4,* 21st May 2020, p. 9, Fig. 3.1

[2] Office of Rail and Road, *Passenger Rail Performance: 1 January to 31 March 2022,* 26th May 2022, p. 11

approaches (14), improvements to track (12) and modifications to maintenance facilities (10).

3.6   Of the 121 interventions, 13 have been identified as priorities, which could be enacted in shorter timescales and thereby produce benefits relatively quickly. These include improvements at Leeds and Manchester Piccadilly Stations, in the Buxton and Glossop areas, at Preston and Lancaster Stations, and on the branch lines to Ilkley, Colne and Blackpool South. Appendix 1 gives further details of how the schemes were identified and the scope and purpose of the priority schemes.

3.7   Network Rail have recently initiated a review of their strategic planning procedures in the light of the government's five objectives for the railway industry, as outlined in the call for evidence for the Whole Industry Strategic Plan. These objectives include "meeting customers' needs" and "levelling up and connectivity", and thus directly relate to the issues described above. Better train performance would also contribute to the objectives of "delivering financial sustainability" and "contributing to long-term economic growth". Network Rail have advised Transport for the North that smaller schemes such as those identified in the *Reliability & Resilience Delivery Plan* would not normally be included in a long-term process such as the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) but could be progressed through the Route Enhancements teams.

3.8   Network Rail is now initiating a resilience strategy for the Eastern Region, and as a first step Transport for the North has shared the reliability and resilience work with the team that is leading that (under Network Rail's Head of Strategic Planning who leads on region-wide issues). North West & Central Region are also now looking at performance and resilience issues and have also recently asked that Transport for the North share the work with them. It should be noted that one early suggestion on collaborating on building business cases for specific performance schemes is that Network Rail could provide estimates of the capital expenditure involved in these schemes, whilst Transport for the North could calculate the socio-economic benefits and revenue that they would generate, thereby jointly producing a cost-benefit analysis for the Economic Case.

4.   Corporate Considerations

Financial Implications

4.1   There are no direct funding implications for Transport for the North. Preliminary work has been undertaken within previously allocated budget. Transport for the North is not funded for delivery of the schemes and the report proposes seeking devolved funding for this purpose.

Resource Implications

4.2   Any resource implications to Transport for the North as a result of this paper will be considered as part of Transport for the North 's forthcoming annual business planning process.

Legal Implications

4.3   There are no apparent Legal implications as a result of this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

4.4   There are two related Transport for the North corporate risks which are actively being managed: 309 (viability of train services) and 311 (future timetables).

Environmental Implications

4.5   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 stimulate the need for SEA or EIA. Rail has an essential part

to play in achieving our decarbonisation objectives within Transport for the North's *Decarbonisation Strategy,* particularly around reducing private car vehicle mileage and road freight miles.

Equality and Diversity

4.6 A full Impact Assessment has not been carried out because it is not required for this report.

Consultations

4.7 Transport for the North's partners have been informally consulted on the approach (via Officers' Reference Group and Strategic Oversight Group) and will have the opportunity to provide further input as the proposition evolves.

5. Background Papers

5.1 None

6. Appendix

6.1 Appendix 1 - Identification of Priority Schemes.

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.

a) DfT — Department for Transport
b) EIA — Environmental Impact Assessment
c) GBR — Great British Railways
d) IST — Integrated & Smart Travel
e) LTRS — *Long Term Rail Strategy* (published by Transport for the North in January 2018)
f) NERMU — North East Rail Management Unit
g) NPIER — Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review
h) NPR — Northern Powerhouse Rail
i) NTC — Northern Transport Charter
j) RNP — Rail North Partnership
k) STP — *Strategic Transport Plan* (published by Transport for the North in February 2019)
l) Transport for the North — Transport for the North
m) TPE — TransPennine Express
n) TOC — Train Operating Company
o) FOC — Freight Operating Company
p) RNEP — Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline.

Appendix 1: Identification of Priority Schemes

Transport for the North has regular progress meetings with TransPennine Express, Northern Trains and Network Rail. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss additional interventions that would improve reliability of train services and improve resilience of the network infrastructure, and to agree which interventions require further investigation by the TOCs or Network Rail, or in some instances both.

Identification of new potential interventions will be a continuous process (at the performance improvement meetings), and those that should be taken forward will be agreed between Transport for the North, Network Rail and the TOCs. Transport for the North also engage with our partner Local Transport Authorities to discuss and agree additional interventions that should be considered for further discussion with Network Rail and the TOCs.

DfT's EAST (Early Assessment & Sifting Tool) sifting tool process is recognised as a tool to quickly evaluate and sift interventions and has therefore been adopted for this purpose. EAST has been designed so that it can be applied without having to obtain detailed evidence as is usually required to support feasibility studies. This flexibility allows options to be considered at an early stage of development. For Transport for the North's *Reliability & Resilience Delivery Plan,* EAST was used to identify the highest priority interventions. These are shown in the table below.

Priority Reliability & Resilience Schemes

Item	Scheme detail	Scheme benefits
Lancaster Station	This scheme is intended to solve the signalling overlap issues at Lancaster Station, which delay trains arriving in to Platform 3 from the south when other services are arriving or departing from Platforms 1 & 2.	• More punctual arrivals at Lancaster from the south • More flexibility in station operations
Astley Level Crossing	This scheme will investigate the speed restriction at Astley Level Crossing (between Patricroft and Newton-le-Willows) and how this restriction can be raised, thereby completing a 2013 project.	• Reduced journey times • Added resilience in the timetable
Selby Swing Bridge	This scheme will investigate opportunities to improve the reliability of the swing bridge operation.	• Reduced cancellations and delays when the bridge mechanism (or associated safety equipment) fail
Keadby Canal Bridge	This scheme will investigate opportunities to improve the reliability of the bridge operation.	• Reduced cancellations and delays when the bridge mechanism (or associated safety equipment) fail
Mickle Trafford to Helsby	Installation of an intermediate block signal between Mickle Trafford and Helsby.	• Improved flexibility and capacity
Blackpool South Line	This is a performance enhancement scheme at Moss Side Level Crossing, which will have treadles installed to remove the need for the train to always stop.	• A 2 to 3 minute journey time reduction (which can be taken as a performance benefit) per round trip

Menston	This proposal involves local resignalling in order to deliver intermediate block signals which will reduce headways and improve performance.	• Improved performance • Potential increased frequency in future
Preston Platform 0	This scheme will upgrade the Parcels Platform to passenger operation in order to provide additional slow lines platform capability and flexibility for terminating services.	• Improved platform capacity • Improved performance through operational flexibility
Chaffers Level Crossing	This scheme comprises a further upgrade to Chaffers Level Crossing (near Nelson) in order to remove the need to come to a standstill on approach.	• Journey time reduction • Performance improvement
Turton Level Crossing	This requires an upgrade to the crossing in order to increase the linespeed, thereby reducing the time taken to traverse the single line section between Bromley Cross and Darwen.	• Journey time reduction • Performance improvement
Glossop & Hadfield Linespeed Improvement	This scheme will increase linespeeds around Dinting (and through to Glossop and Hadfield) in order to reduce journey times and improve performance.	• Journey time reduction • Performance improvement
Buxton	This scheme will provide a crossover and signalling in order to enable arrivals into Platform 1 (and the middle road) without the need to shunt, thereby maximising operational flexibility.	• Improved performance • Operational flexibility
Leeds/ Manchester Piccadilly	This scheme will explore the feasibility of hand-held devices used to complement TRTS (train ready to start) equipment, and implement them if appropriate.	• Improved performance • Improved safety