

Meeting: Rail North Committee Consultation Call
Subject: Rail North Partnership Operational Update
Author: Gary Bogan, Rail North Partnership Director
Sponsor: Darren Oldham, Rail and Road Director
Meeting Date: Wednesday 21 February 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.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee 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.

3. Overview:

- 3.1 A summary of performance for the last 6 months for TransPennine Trains (TPT) and Northern Trains Ltd (NTL) provided by TfN is included at Appendix 1. 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, while operators focus also on reducing training backlogs.
- 3.2 ASLEF took national action from 1 to 9 December 2023 and 29 January to 6 February 2024. Throughout these periods, staff did not work overtime/rest days (Action Short of Strike - ASOS), leading to staff shortages and thus cancellations. ASLEF also held strikes on Northern and TransPennine Express on 8 December and 31 January, when neither operator ran services.
- 3.3 RNP is working with TPT and NTL to enable the operators to take appropriate actions for their respective businesses and to ensure there are appropriate recovery plans in place and hold them to account for delivery.

4. TransPennine Express:

4.1 **New Timetable** – On Sunday 10 December, TPT introduced a new temporary timetable with changes to the core North Route to help accelerate driver training and stabilise performance.

Below are some indicators of how the new timetable is performing in the New Year (1-20 January 2024). We have not focused on the December festive period which does not make for clear comparisons with multiple Bank Holidays and atypical travel demand patterns. As a comparison, we have used period 9 weeks 1 to 3, which excludes the ASOS week:

- TPT cancellations are down 26 per cent on average, despite some challenging weather-related issues. Fewer than 5 per cent of cancellations were TPT train-crew related
- “Trains over seated capacity” were down 72 per cent from around 40-45 per day down to 10 per day
- P-codes were very much reduced – with no crew related p-codes during the period measured. The only P-coding was due to weather-related fleet

disruption. Overall P-coding was down 89 per cent compared to Railway Period 09

- Following a slowdown over the festive period, driver training was progressing faster than the previous period and on plan for service restoration in December 2024.

TPT remains confident that, as planned, this timetable is delivering the stability their customers need and allowing TPT to clear the route competency training backlog. The operator continues, however, to highlight the need to keep this progress – and any ongoing reliance on Rest Day Working under close review in the light of a difficult industrial relations situation at national level. However, with work still to be done in clearing that backlog, TPT did see some P-coding during the ASOS week Monday 29 January until Tuesday 6 February.

- 4.2 **Update on service restoration metrics** - TPT has made good progress in training drivers, aided by the reinstatement of a driver Rest Day Working (RDW) agreement. The training backlog has reduced to nearly c.2,500 training days outstanding from the original 6,000. Full route and traction knowledge has improved from 65 per cent to 66 per cent since November, and 91 per cent of drivers now have 85 per cent of the competency required.

However, this positive picture is offset by more significant gaps at some locations, particularly York and Sheffield, where considerable work is required to prepare for the December 2024 timetable and the TRU diversionary strategy. This means only 79 per cent of TPT depots currently meet the 85 per cent competency test agreed in September last year to trigger service re-introduction. TPT is currently developing plans for uplifting services from this summer to benefit customers while working within the constraints at key depots with significant training outstanding. However, plans for full restoration of service by December 2024 remain on track.

5. Northern:

- 5.1 **Service Delivery** - Train crew availability continues to drive cancellations, with improvement activity focused on sickness, skills and Sundays. Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve both fell on Sunday with record levels of conductor unavailability, particularly in West and Central. Sundays remain outside of the working week for conductors across Northern and drivers in the North-West. Services were further impacted by various storms across the period. Northern are continuing with several actions to improve performance focussing on reducing the impact of sickness absence and delivery of driver training. Its new occupational health provider is shortly going live, and Northern is working with them to look at early transfer of activity to help support return to work. Early data from January has shown a reduction in train crew related cancellations; RNP will continue to monitor progress closely.

- 5.2 **Timetable Changes** - Northern have implemented the December timetable changes, which saw the majority of services remaining unchanged, with the focus being on train reallocation to better match capacity with demand. We are now looking ahead to the next industry timetable change in June 2024. The changes for June 2024 include provision for the introduction of the Northumberland Line; improving the train lengths on the Leeds-Carlisle route to meet seasonal demand; a new Saturday service between Manchester and Ribbleshead; and the cascade of Class 323 trains from West Midlands Trains to reinstate previously lost capacity. The revised ECML timetable structure has been endorsed by the Programme Board and work continues on improving the final timetables and operational readiness. Work is now underway to develop plans for 2025 service changes.

- 5.3 **Senior Leadership changes** – In November, Richard Hinds was appointed the new Finance Director. Richard was a former CFO of a global tech distributor. As

the Committee will be aware, Tricia Williams will succeed Nick Donovan as Managing Director later this year. Northern have recently announced the appointment of Matt Rice, currently Route Director at Network Rail North and East region, to the role of Chief Operating Officer succeeding Tricia Williams.

6. TransPennine Route Upgrade (TRU)

- 6.1 TRU successfully delivered Christmas 2023 and New Year works possessions, although some of work planned east of Leeds will need to be rescheduled. TRU disruption is limited to weekends in January and February 2024, with longer blockades planned throughout the year: the first will be a 9-day block on Hope Valley in March.
- 6.2 The two operators are putting into action their 2024 readiness plans with additional management resources joining the team in January in preparation for the increased access during the year.

7. Other operators:

Transport for Wales Rail-Trafnidiaeth Cymru (TfW)

- 7.1 In the December Timetable change TfW introduced a service uplift on the Wrexham to Bidston line (every 45 minutes) in line with work on its five-point plan to improve performance and reliability on this line.
- 7.2 The hourly service reinstatement between Liverpool to Chester was suppressed due to fleet availability. TfW is planning to introduce this in the coming months.
- 7.3 Station improvement works at Chester, Flint and Runcorn East continue, with TfW investing millions of pounds to improve customer facilities at these stations.
- 7.4 In period 10 TfW Cross Borders recorded 706 on-the-day cancellations: of the top 10 incidents, 7 were infrastructure related, though the top 2 incidents were Mark IV unit faults. Flooding was responsible for almost a fifth of all on-the-day cancellations, with the largest impact on December 27 and January 02. Unit shortages were responsible for nearly a quarter of all on-the-day cancellations, caused by wheel cavities on class 197s and unavailability of class 67s from DB Cargo. Pre-cancellations increased this period, with unit availability and adverse weather conditions the main contributors.

Hull Trains

- 7.5 Hull Trains has seen a dip in performance recently caused by external factors such as storms and the infrastructure failures associated with these. The company was however the only operator to provide a direct link between Yorkshire and London over recent weekends where London King's Cross was closed due to the East Coast Digital Upgrade. Hull Trains' rolling stock was awarded the gold award at the annual industry Golden Spanner awards, for having best in class reliability, and continues to perform to a very high standard.
- 7.6 Hull Trains has submitted the first phase of an application to the Office of Rail and Road for a new open access rail service between Sheffield and London. The operation would see Sheffield, Woodhouse, Worksop and Retford receive new services using the East Coast Mainline to London King's Cross. The proposal consists of two return journeys a day from London King's Cross to Sheffield via Retford, aimed at providing a faster and greener link than existing road transport alternatives.

Lumo

- 7.7 Recent performance on Lumo has been affected by storms, which meant that parts of the East Coast Mainline were closed due to infrastructure damage. This reduced performance against targets, however passenger numbers remained

strong, and the operator continues to make a dent in the London–Edinburgh air market.

- 7.8 Lumo has announced plans for an additional return journey between Newcastle and London. This would see a new early morning service from Newcastle to London, with an additional evening return which will enable up to an additional 277,000 passengers between the cities each year, representing around a 15% increase in Lumo’s capacity. Proposals have been submitted as part of the East Coast Main Line ‘ESG’ timetable review exercise and will be subject to final timing refinements with Network Rail ahead of an application for approval from ORR. Under the new timetable, Lumo’s full route London to Edinburgh services are expected to see journey time improvements by around 10 minutes on some journeys.

East Midlands Railway

- 7.9 EMR has been examining optimal allocation of rolling stock across its Regional network and as part of a dedicated workstream, an end-state proposal has been developed which could see EMR operating circa 50% of the trains on the Liverpool – Norwich route as Class 158 units (as today) and the remaining circa 50% being operated by Class 170 units in 3 and 6 car formation, giving a 25% capacity uplift along the whole route.
- 7.10 To test this proposal, EMR implemented a trial within their December 2023 timetable that sees a number of services being comprised of extended units, and with Class 170 trains.
- 7.11 This trial is intended to evaluate the impact of the punctuality of these trains, customer feedback and any operational challenges from the operation of the trains, and if successful could then pave the way for additional services to be turned over to Class 170 operation on the Liverpool – Norwich line.
- 7.12 EMR has also equipped EMR Regional services with automatic announcements, following a successful roll-out on the south end of the Midland Main Line.

8. Corporate Considerations:

Financial Implications

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

Resource Implications

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

Legal Implications

- 8.3 Any legal implications are contained within this report.

Risk Management and Key Issues

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

Environmental Implications

- 8.5 This report does not constitute or influence a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the 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

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

9. Appendices:

9.1 Appendix 1 – Performance update.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used:

ASLEF	The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ASOS	Action Short of Strike
DOHL	Department for Transport OLR Holdings Ltd
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
MSL	Minimum Service Level
NTL	Northern Trains Ltd or (“Northern”)
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.

Performance update

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

The data is reported under the performance metrics:

- On-time (arriving within 59 seconds)
- T-3 (arriving within 3 minutes)
- T-15 (arriving within 15 minutes)
- Cancellations (% of trains cancelled v planned to run)
- P-codes (% of trains pre-planned cancellation)

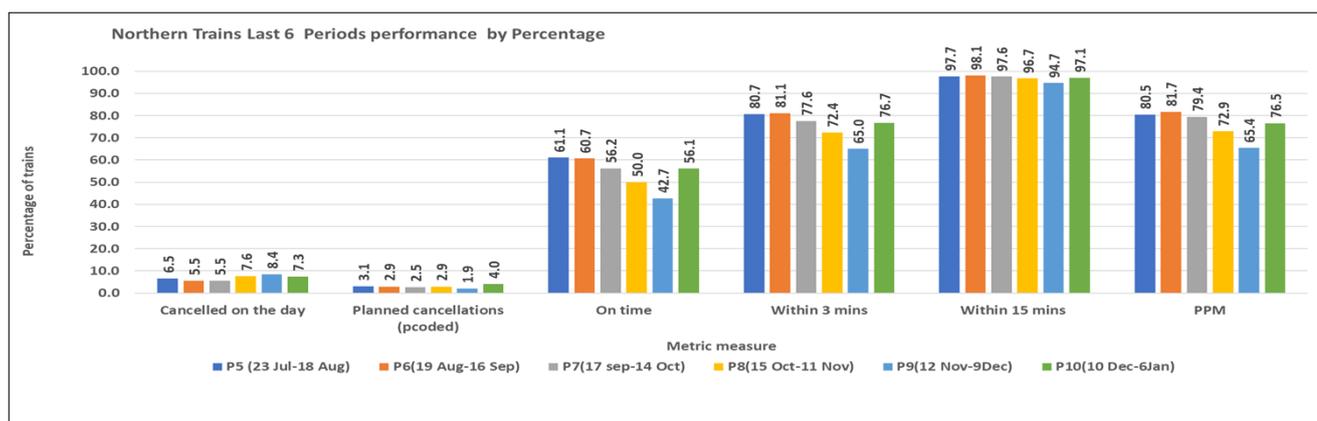
TPE introduced some service reductions in the December 2023 timetable over the north route. Early indications are very encouraging, and period ten performance has improved. P-coded trains in period ten have almost disappeared.

Northern performance has improved over the last three periods. P-coded trains are at 4.0% which is the highest over the last six periods. This increase is mostly due to elevated levels of p-codes over the two Sundays during the Christmas period. Early indications for the current period are encouraging with very few p-codes.

Although Public Performance Measure (PPM) is no longer a reporting metric but is a combination of all metrics, it has been included as a visual guide (data for PPM is extracted from the Office of Rail and Road webpages).

Periods are calculated each four weeks and period dates are included in the charts.

Northern



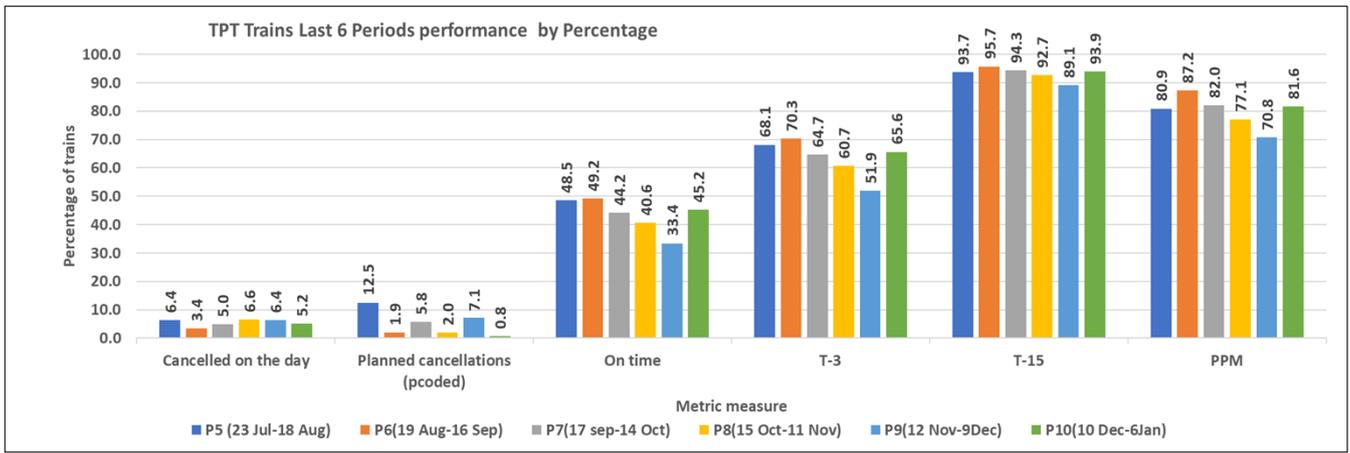
Period nine returned the worst performance over the last six periods.

The latest period, ten, saw the best performance over the last three periods.

Planned cancellations (p-codes) for period ten are the highest for the last six periods at 4.0%.

Although PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that PPM has improved and stands at 76.5%, the best over the last three periods.

TPT



TransPennine Trains performance has improved across all metrics over the last three periods.

P-coded services peaked at 6.6% in period six and then significantly reduced to only 0.8% in period ten.

Although PPM is no longer an official measure; analysis shows that PPM has improved to 81.6% since period seven.