

***Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport***

***promoting quality public transport.....***

## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015 - The Storey Institute, Lancaster**

**Conference kindly supported by First TransPennine Express**

### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Lancaster and began by presenting a summary of recent projects and work carried out by TWNW. He listed the 28 meetings attended with the rail and bus industries since the last Conference in October and had also carried out his ongoing governance work as Chairman. In addition he had kept the TWNW Facebook page up to date publishing almost daily articles on issues affecting passengers.

Survey projects have included an examination of the quality of travel experiences of users of the English National Concessionary Travel pass (ENCTS), the results of which were recently published, and a monitor of the train replacement bus services between Manchester & Manchester Airport during the recent closure period, the results of which will be published shortly. Initial liaison has taken place with most of the bidders for the Northern and TPE franchises and this will be repeated once the Invitation to Tender (ITT) has been published in a few weeks. News releases were issued drawing attention to cuts in bus services, particularly in rural areas, and the challenge being faced by both passengers and providers as subsidies are cut. This work will be ongoing as the year progresses with the likelihood of more cuts to budgets and bus subsidies.

### **2. Welcome to Lancaster**

***Cllr Susie Charles, Mayor of Lancaster City Council***

Cllr. Charles welcomed delegates to the City of Lancaster and thanked TWNW for its important work and for choosing the City as the location for its winter Conference. Public Transport is a vital utility in Lancaster & Morecambe as well as the outlying areas of the District. The tourism and leisure industry as well as the University's 12,000 students rely on the bus services and the rail connections and there is support for the electrification of local lines in the area. There is also much concern about cuts to weekend bus services and those serving rural areas. The new road link, currently being constructed, linking Heysham with the M6 will be a major step forward to alleviate the heavy traffic congestion the area endures but internal transport will still be a high priority.

### 3. Supporting Bus Travel in Lancashire

*Tony Moreton, Asst. Director, Sustainable Transport, Lancs. County Council*

Lancashire County Council faces a £300 million cut in its budget and with such financial constraint, subsidies to support public transport must be placed alongside other priorities for consideration.

The Council supports 20% of the bus services in the County with a budget of £8million. Passengers take 59million bus journeys per annum with 12 million of them travelling on subsidised services. Recent budget constraints have been heavily challenging but proposals to continue the level of support are under consideration using new criteria which will lead to a review of the network.

**Concessionary Travel** has a budget of £20million for its operation most of which reimburses operators. The government provides £15million with the Council having to find the remaining £5million. The ENCT scheme has 204,000 pass holders which represents a 69% take up of eligible citizens. In addition 21,000 disabled passes are issued and together concessionary travel represents 30% of all travel (18 million journeys). The take up of the scheme has recently levelled off after seeing increases over the last few years but its future is dependent on Central Government.

The Council is required to provide statutory travel for **Schools** and services require a budget of £7million to provide for 10,000 pass holders. The Council issues contracts for service operations to bus companies by competition, many of whom are small operators, who recognise the opportunity for further future growth.

**Community Transport** is currently membership based and operates on a “Dial a Ride” basis using both buses and volunteer driven cars. It has a £1.4million budget and a new contract will be issued from 1 April next. There is a challenge to provide a better interface between Community Transport groups and the bus network as a 20% increase in passengers is predicted over the next 3 years as well as a similar required increase in volunteers. In the light of budget implications there will be more work to do on working better together.

**Information provision** is seen as vital tool for passengers and requires regular monitoring and updating to utilise all modern electronic media systems as well as the traditional methods. This includes the constant updating of data, to service Smartphone apps, Google requirements and journey planners.

For the future a number of options will need to be examined as alternatives to provide efficient and economic public transport. These could include Parish based services, deeper partnerships between bus operators, combined local authority working and quality contracts. At the heart will be understanding passenger needs.

In subsequent discussion, subjects included taxi buses, the need for a national standardised subsidy level to support bus services, eliminating fraudulent use of passes, information systems, current shortcomings of technology in addressing passenger bus use, the need for better marketing of the bus service network, and

the opportunity for public use of schools services and were all acknowledged as requiring attention and review for the future.

#### 4. Delivering for our Customers

##### *Kathryn O'Brien, Customer Service Director, First TransPennine Express*

First TransPennine Express is now in its 11th year of operation and during that time has seen passenger numbers double to 26million per year.10 new trains have recently entered service providing 40 vehicles and this has allowed an 80% increase in services between Manchester and Scotland and a 30% increase between Manchester and Leeds. 72% of passengers travel for leisure purposes.

Recent months have witnessed a dip in performance by 3 percentage points to a satisfaction level of 82%, mainly due to increased congestion on the network and a number of track and train maintenance challenges. Some train units have had to be taken out of service for long term engineering issues and some of the new 350 electric trains have exhibited coupling failures. To manage the issue senior executives from across the company and Network Rail have been meeting regularly in a "war room" style to find solutions.

FTPE has the highest seat occupancy of any train operating company but customer service remains at the forefront with visible and approachable people, cleanliness, excellence, and good crisis management as priorities. **Blue Assist** is a new concept being rolled out to target disadvantaged people whose disability may not be apparent and FTPE is the first TOC to adopt it.

Staff are recognised as the company's main asset and the training regime is still as intensive and remains a main priority. **World Host**, a Canadian concept adopted by various airlines and the London Olympics is used to develop customer care skills. The company has been awarded a Gold standard in Investors in People and other excellence awards from outside the rail industry.

The Government is investing £50million on the availability of WiFi on trains and on stations and it will be available at a number of FTPE stations shortly.

The departure to Chiltern Trains of the 10 Class 170 fleet of trains, by virtue of the RoSCo franchise agreement, has left challenges to the company and a number of 156 units have been procured from Northern to operate Blackpool services and some in Cumbria as an interim measure operating as 4 coach trains from 17 May.

From 2 May to 4 October Farnworth tunnel near Bolton will undergo major engineering work to re-bore the tunnel to allow it to accommodate future electric trains and this will also necessitate a re-position of a platform at Farnworth station.. Services through the tunnel will be limited to single line working during this period allowing, 3 trains per hour with some additions in peak hours, and will be bus replacement operations at weekends.

The company is still in negotiation with the DfT in respect of a Direct Franchise award to extend the current arrangement until February 2016. It is hoped that this

will be resolved soon. First Group is bidding to retain the TPE franchise with the ITT imminent after which planning in detail can commence.

In subsequent discussion reference was made to platform management at Manchester Piccadilly, quiet coaches, changes to on train catering, and the general lack of train investment in Northern England all of which are being pursued for improvement or under consideration.

## **5. “Just a Minute”** *Issues raised by delegates*

The Just a Minute session included issues raised on the use of the Settle – Carlisle route as a diversionary route, pre-arrival information on stations re. train formations, and the future of Community Transport and its ability to replace timetabled bus services.

## **6. Rail Franchising: Focussing on the needs of the North** *Hugh Chaplain, Franchising Lead, Rail North*

Rail North was set up in 2012 to develop a long term rail strategy and prioritise rail development and investment over the next 20 years. Its Board consists of 30 partners from the local authorities of the North of England. It was incorporated in September 2014 and a small Executive team is being recruited. Its main objectives are to transform rail services across the North by:

- Developing quality improvements to trains and stations
- Feeding economic growth by better connectivity
- Finding solutions to overcrowding
- Improving end to end journey times and frequencies
- Improving operational coherence to make the network more “user friendly”
- Making the network cost effective

Its main work will be to steer the delivery of the future Northern and TransPennine Express franchises. Unfortunately it is currently constrained by the delay in the publication of the Invitation to Tender (ITT). When it appears in a few weeks it will invite bids by early summer with the awards being announced in late 2015 with services commencing in early 2016. The ITT will feature the Franchise Agreement, Train Service requirement, Financial Templates and legal documents and will be accompanied by a Stakeholder Briefing Document. Issues will cover train services, capacity, rolling stock, stations, community engagement, fares and ticketing, performance measures, infra-structure, branding and marketing, environment and sustainability and customer experience.

Rail North will look to successful bidders to address new innovative opportunities alongside the ITT and also complete station management may be negotiable. There was a need for new and refurbished rolling stock and Rail North was pushing hard for a transformation in quality. The North should not be seen as the poor relation compared with other parts of the country. Additionally Rail North would consider a new, more intensive regime of Stakeholder liaison.

In subsequent discussion the issues of the often misleading comparison of fare prices between different regions of the UK was raised and it was acknowledged as an issue in all parts of the country with a major review of fares being desirable, but recognised as an extremely complex area. Concern was expressed that the major urban conurbations may dominate the RN strategy at the expense of rural areas but assurance that everything will be considered in fine detail was forthcoming.

## 7. Next Conference

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2015, Hornby Theatre, Blackburn

### Attendance

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Name	Organisation
Aidan Turner-Bishop	Campaign for Better Transport Lancashire
Anthony Fiocca	ROSSO
Barry Dobson	Arriva North West
Brendan O'Reilly	ROSSO
Cedric Green	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Chris Dale	TravelWatch NorthWest
Chris Jarvis	Institute of Transport Administration
Cllr Susie Charles	Mayor Lancaster City Council
Clyde Raine	Friends of Heaton Chapel
Colin Barnett	
Colin Kennington	TravelWatch NorthWest
Craig Harrop	Northern Rail
Craig Wright	Goyt Valley Rail Users Association
David Burton	South East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership
David Butterworth	TravelWatch NorthWest
David Culshaw	Friends of Hindley station
David Evans	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association
David Thrower	
David Wood	TravelWatch MidlandsWest
Ed Boothroyd	
Fred Consterdine	
Geoff Kerr	
Harry Boardman	Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association
Hugh Chaplain	Rail North
Ian Stuart	
Ian Waterhouse	Friends of Heaton Chapel
Ian Watson	
Janet Briggs	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Jim Davies	
Jim Trotman	Cumbrian Community Rail Partnerships
John Aaron	
John Hart	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Moorhouse	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Nicholas	

John Owen	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Richardson	
John Sellars	Goyt Valley Rail Users Association
Kathy Jones	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Kathryn O'Brien	First TransPennine Express
Keith Pennyfather	
Ken Harper	
Ken McKelvie	Ramblers Association
Leonard Green	TravelWatch NorthWest
Malcolm Conway	TravelWatch NorthWest
Malcolm Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association
Matthew Sutton	Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire Ltd
Mike Laycock	Wirral Transport Users Association
Mike Machin	Lancaster Morecambe & District RUG
Neil Caldwell	Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport NW
Nigel Winter	Stagecoach Cumbria & N Lancs
Paul Fawcett	TravelWatch NorthWest
Peter Lamkin	Wrexham Birkenhead Rail Users Association
Phil Rowbotham	Friends of Heaton Chapel
Philip Briggs	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Richard Blaikie	Kirkby Lonsdale Coach Hire Ltd
Richard Lysons	Friends of Littleborough Station
Richard Morris	Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line
Richard Rollins	TravelWatch NorthWest
Robert Florence	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Robert Kenyon	Hyndburn Borough Council
Robert Talbot	TravelWatch NorthWest
Roger Ducat	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association
Ron Herbert	
Sarah Cunningham	First TransPennine Express
Simon Reynish	Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport NW
Stephen Forde	Stockport Metropolitan District Council
Stephen Jones	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Tony Moreton	Lancashire County Council
Tony Parker	Furness Line Rail Action Group
Tony Young	TravelWatch NorthWest