

Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)

promoting quality public transport.....

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Thursday 7th February 2019
The Mechanics Centre, Manchester**

**Conference kindly supported by First TransPennine Express
& Stagecoach Manchester**

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Manchester and thanked First TransPennine Express and Stagecoach Manchester for their generous support to the Conference.

He began by referring to the recent industrial action by Northern Rail staff and was pleased that an agreement had been reached to suspend the strikes with immediate effect to allow further talks to take place which he hoped would bring about a permanent solution.

Whilst train cancellations by both FTPE and Northern were occurring on a regular basis the situation had improved somewhat over the last few months but Sunday services are still suffering badly. Delays to the new train fleets are regrettable and may result in further delays to new timetables which, after the experience of 2019 would be unfortunate. Hopefully matters in this issue will improve. He also mentioned the planned closures of the West Coast Main Line at Easter and at Euston on Sundays but was pleased that the information for passengers was much clearer than previously following advice from TWNW after last year's problems.

Bus services in all parts of the region still feature withdrawals, change and route curtailment and there will soon be a need for a total review of how the industry is managed and funded as commercial services remain challenging to operators.

TWNW had responded to the DfT on Improving Assisted Travel welcoming many of the points and emphasising the need for a specified timescale for making stations fully accessible and for operators to aim at a "Turn up and Go" policy at all stations. A response to the Williams Rail Review is in preparation.

He mentioned the 17 meetings and events that he and colleagues had attended on behalf of TWNW since the last Conference covering all aspects of transport issues in the North West.

2. Welcome to Manchester

Cllr. Mark Aldred, Chair, Transport for Greater Manchester

Cllr. Aldred welcomed delegates to Manchester and gave his appreciation to TWNW for the work it carries out on behalf of passengers. He went on to refer to the numerous projects and initiatives of TfGM:

2018 had been a record breaking year for Metrolink which now featured 93 stops, 100 km of route and carried 43 million passengers. Progress was being made on the £330 million Trafford Park extension with a target for opening in 2020. The new zonal fare system was introduced in January to simplify the fare range.

The Vantage bus guided busway had grown to carry 2.9 million passengers (55,000 per week) after a £122 million bus priority investment. Contactless payment for all bus services is being rolled out in the near future and in September 2019 a 2 year trial will commence to provide free bus travel for young people.

Chris Boardman had been appointed as Walking and Cycling Commissioner with a budget of £160 million to deliver the agenda which features 1000 miles of dedicated walking and cycling paths.

A new Congestion Deal is in progress to provide solutions quickly including better roadwork control and planning, seeking a flexible working initiative.

Air Pollution is responsible for 1200 deaths per year in Greater Manchester so a Clean Air Plan will be considered in Spring to control emission levels and examine the social and economic consequences

A Transport Delivery Plan had recently been launched to include a 20 year Vision with particular emphasis to serve development areas and integration. £69.5 million had been provided by government but more is required.

3. TransPennine Express – Developments and Challenges

Chris Nutton, Major Projects Director, First TransPennine Express

TPE was the fastest growing franchise in the UK but unfortunately had suffered crowding issues for some time and punctuality had been a major issue in 2018. However there is confidence that the position will be recovered in 2019 as the new train fleet comes into service. Performance was back to 86% in January and work is ongoing to deliver the new timetables in May and December this year.

New services will feature 3 return services per day from Liverpool to Glasgow with an additional service to Cumbria. The current Liverpool to Newcastle service will be extended to Edinburgh and staff will be doubled in Scotland.

New trains will be introduced to routes by Autumn this year as follows:

- Liverpool to Scarborough & Middlesbrough – NOVA 3 trains
- Manchester Airport to Scotland via WCML – NOVA 2 trains
- Liverpool – Newcastle/Edinburgh via ECML – NOVA 3 bi-mode trains

Following trials a SMART Season ticket will be rolled out on a route by route basis this year and a Social Media presence by WhatsApp link will be launched. In subsequent discussion the following points arose:

- Engine idling in Stations – Technical issue but trains will have an engine cut-out to seek minimal emissions.
- Late Train Door Opening at journey start – Seeking to improve crew preparation time.
- Train Priority Management – Fast long distance trains diagrammed for priority to pass at available points but depends on punctuality. Better corridors required.
- Stops at Wigan & Oxford Road – Omitted due to timetable and availability of alternative services but trains will revert to Bolton corridor after electrification.
- Late delivery of trains – Issues being addressed but confident introduction will be achieved by Autumn.
- Platform lengths and extensions - £7 million being spent at selected stations and controlled door operating will be used.
- Castlefield Corridor Congestion – Ideally needs extra lines but currently being studied by DfT.
- Trans Pennine Corridor Electrification – DfT seeking best value solution with least disruption. In dialogue with stakeholders.

4. The Interchange Programme in Greater Manchester ***Chris Barnes, Head of Projects TfGM***

New Interchanges had been completed at Rochdale, Wythenshawe, Bolton, and Wigan. Others at Ashton, Bury and Stockport are in the development stage. Criteria used in the development of transport interchanges are as follows:

A Design Approach has been adopted that features no overcrowding, a sense of place, high quality materials, no congestion, seamless connections, capacity for future growth, minimal passenger/traffic conflict and optimum green energy use.

Passenger Environments feature covered waiting areas, lighting, security including extensive CCTV and natural surveillance, toilets and ticket information.

Sustainability matters feature minimal carbon emissions, waste targets, on site energy generation, Smart consumption, and living roofs with tended gardens.

Accessibility Amenities include step free access, tactile surfaces, accessible toilets, staff availability, good sight lines, street furniture, wayfinding facilities, and inclusive information. A Reference Group to inform design has been established.

Connectivity at convenient distance to other modes of transport and cycle storage facilities.

Public Art and events in engagement with local communities featuring live on site performances, local culture and sculptures.

Support to Regeneration in harmony with retail expansions & residential developments as well as creating green space.

Passenger satisfaction measures have revealed a marked improvement at all the new interchanges.

Future projects include:

- Tram/Train
- Congestion/Air Quality improvement schemes
- Cycling and walking facilities as alternatives to car

In subsequent discussion the following points arose:

- Stockport interchange with Rail – Seeking direct Link
- Maintenance of green space – Plan in place with Stockport Council
- Incremental Development – Heritage protected as much as possible
- Real time information – Technology challenge but seeking solutions

5. The work of the Rail Safety & Standards Board ***Chris Leech, Engagement Manager, Contract & Suppliers, RSSB***

The RSSB was formed in 2003 following the Ladbroke Grove accident. Its role is to assist the rail industry to continually improve safety standards. It is a membership organisation and is supported by all TOCs, government, RoSCOs, Network Rail and many other stakeholders in the industry.

A Strategy for Standards is published to help the industry work with standards at UK, European and International levels to help rail companies to address their legal and other obligations.

It carries out in depth research and innovation programmes driven by the needs of the rail industry and its stakeholders to provide a strategic focus, long term objectives, improvements to all railway associated operations, and finding solutions by use of intelligence, new technologies, and experience from international sources.

Risk analysis is carried out in all types of operation and in particular new train operations, train design, station design, CCTV operation, accident investigation, performance measures and driver operations.

Safety measures are an imperative part of its work and include train/platform interfaces, trespass, signals passed at danger, and level crossings amongst numerous other aspects.

As the railway develops and passenger numbers grow RSSB experiences constant safety challenges and is also leading a Task Force on de-carbonisation together

with DfT and the industry and has recently launched an initial report for consideration by the Rail Minister.

The RSSB works actively with its subsidiary, CIRAS (Confidential Reporting for Safety) in the delivery of a Health & Safety reporting Strategy and to produce intelligence, experiences and to carry out case studies. Susan Gray, CIRAS' Stakeholder Manager North, gave a short insight into the work of her organisation.

Full details of RSSB and CIRAS can be found on their websites:

www.rssb.co.uk and www.ciras.org.uk

Finally, Chris invited TWNW to become an associated informant to RSSB and this offer was gratefully accepted.

In subsequent discussion the following points arose:

- Train Interior design to provide good sightlines – This has been identified as an issue and solutions are being examined.
- Double Decker Trains- Believed to be advantageous but currently no appetite in the UK rail industry or DfT.
- Station Platform management – An App is in development to inform passengers about train positioning.
- Safe door closing mechanisms – currently being addressed.

6. Championing the Passenger

David Sidebottom, Transport User Director, Transport Focus

Transport Focus is the independent, statutory, consumer watchdog for Britain's rail, bus, coach and tram passengers in England (outside London) and all users of England's motorways and major 'A' roads – the Strategic Road Network (SRN). It represents transport users and champions their needs. It undertakes numerous research projects and provides advice and evidence to government and operators to help improve performance and passenger issues.

It carries out the Rail Passenger Satisfaction survey which has 60,000 respondents. The most recent published survey was in Autumn 2018 and this revealed that the North had experienced a major decline in satisfaction at 72% Within the region the lowest rates emerged from Greater Manchester with particular emphasis on Northern Rail and TransPennine Express services.

It was clear that the Northern industrial dispute had a wide effect on the results and the wider network. Transport Focus is pushing for a comprehensive compensation package to benefit those passengers who experienced the many problems and is hopeful that something will emerge soon. Research had indicated that there was a general lack of understanding amongst passengers about the reasons behind the dispute and said that communication had been extremely poor.

Transport Focus had worked with Merseytravel and a panel of its passengers to inform the development of the new train fleet being introduced, advising on interior design and information delivery.

Transport Focus uses a panel to examine passenger experiences of tram systems and satisfaction levels. It has also carried out research into bus services and a recent project with Stagecoach Manchester exhibited a satisfaction rate of 88%. It has also been able to identify issues on all public transport and it is clear that anti social behaviour is a problem and also cleanliness of vehicles and rail carriages is a common complaint.

In the road transport sector it has carried out face to face research and is adopting the proven practices used in monitoring the rail industry. Recently a user survey was carried out into motorist's satisfaction levels with motorway service stations with a result of 92% positivity.

Future reports and studies will be forthcoming on Surface access to airports and coach use – March 2019; Derby re-signalling study - may inform Trans Pennine project; Manchester Piccadilly platforms 13 & 14 passenger experience – early 2019. It is also contributing to the Williams Review and the Fares & Ticketing review.

7. “How to increase bus patronage” ***Workshop discussion and plenary feedback***

The Conference broke into 3 Workshop Groups to discuss the issue. Bus patronage had declined by 91 million passengers in 2017/18 and the groups debated the reasons behind this and possible measures that could be applied to reverse the trend. The following is a summary of findings:

Information was seen to be very patchy with few areas offering real time information and a reduction in paper timetable availability. Bus stops often had little information and whilst bus stations in some areas were improving others were quite inadequate. Websites were inconsistent and it was very difficult to find fare information with many operators. There was a need for a national website similar to that provided by National Rail Enquiries. The number of travel Information offices were felt to be diminishing. More should be done to reach out to non users.

Marketing was lacking and few promotional offers or incentives were used to attract new passengers. It was felt that following the examples used by the rail industry to promote to new business and special incentive fare offers could be better exploited.

Collaboration with other operators to offer through tickets could be an incentive to attract more use.

Fares were seen as a dis-incentive in many areas with some being felt to be expensive and unattractive, particularly in rural areas. Little awareness of day multi journey and regional tickets was apparent to attract potential new users and little attention was paid to the couples markets to offer a “duo” ticket incentive. Ticket availability from sources other than on board the bus was scarce and whilst contactless payment was becoming more available, growth in coverage was slow.

Bus stop and bus station environments exhibited mixed views as investment had been applied in many urban areas. However there is a contrast with some towns offering very mundane facilities. Many examples exist of poor passenger accommodation and a poor provision of shelter and seating, again particularly in rural areas.

On Board facilities were felt to be mixed. Whilst new vehicles addressed many needs, numerous vehicles failed to provide visual/ audible information, WiFi, and helpful information such as complaints procedures. Lack of cleanliness was a common issue in many areas with most people experiencing rubbish being left in seating areas. Destination blinds were on the whole good but display on other parts of the bus were uncommon, but new vehicles were providing this better.

Staff helpfulness was seen to be, on the whole, good but on occasions it could be a problem and there was a perception that it fell short of expectation in many cases and this was unhelpful in trying to attract new passengers. Performance varied with most happy to pleasantly communicate with passengers but examples of ignorance were evident. It was also clear that staff were perceived to feel unappreciated by managements and there was a view that employment in the bus industry was unfortunately thought to be low waged and demeaning.

Reliability and Punctuality was an issue particularly where real time information was not available and where frequencies gaps are greater in areas such as rural locations.

Integration with other transport modes and inter-connect information was perceived to be poor and better collaboration with train/tram operators was needed.

Funding, particularly lack of public subsidy, was seen to be a major issue. Incremental budget cuts to Councils and the lack of hypothecation rules by them are a root cause of the withdrawal of services and exert difficulty on operators to provide commercial services.

8. Next Conference

Thursday 13th June 2019, Preston

Attendance

Name	Organisation
John	Aaron
Cllr Mark	Aldred
David	Armstrong
James	Baldwin
Mark	Barker
Chris	Barnes

Colin	Barnett	
John	Berry	Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Assoc.
Alex	Bray	CrossCountry Trains
David	Burton	SE Lancashire Rail Action Partnership
David	Butterworth	TravelWatch NorthWest
Neil	Caldwell	Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport
Roy	Chapman	TravelWatch NorthWest
Judie	Collins	Friends of Altrincham Interchange
Frederick	Consterdine	
Ian	Conway	Lakes Line Rail Users Group
Malcolm	Conway	TravelWatch NorthWest
David	Culshaw	TravelWatch NorthWest
Chris	Dale	TravelWatch NorthWest
Mandy	Davies	Blackpool Transport Services Ltd.
Sandra	Dutson	
Jon	Egan	Institute of Transport Administration
David	Evans	Blackpool & Fylde Rail Usersr Asssoc.
Tony	Fawthrop	GMTAC
Robert	Florence	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Stephen	Forde	Community Rail Manchester
Dee	Fowles	Friends of Heaton Chapel
Jim	Froggatt	TravelWatch East Midlands
Douglas	Gilmore	Mobius Networks
Alan	Goater	Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group
Paul	Grant	Lancaster & Morecambe RUG
Susan	Gray	Confidential Incident Reporting & Analysis Service
Brian	Grey	Wirral Transport Users Association
Sinead	Griffin	Network Rail
Dennis	Harrison	Wirral Transport Users Association
Stephen	Hopkins	Friends of Eccles station
Harry	Howarth	Institute of Transport Administration
Alan	Jackson	
Geoff	Kerr	
Peter	Lamkin	Wrexham- Bidston Rail Users Association
Joanna	Lane	Transport for Greater Manchester
Mike	Laycock	Wirral Transport Users Association
Chris	Leech	Rail Safety & Standards Board
John	Lobb	
Richard	Lysons	Friends of Littleborough stations & STORM

Lucja	Majewski	First TransPennine Express
Carl	McFarlane	R2P
Dawn	McGough	Community Rail Cumbria
John	Moorhouse	TravelWatch NorthWest
Keith	Naylor	Friends of Patricroft station
Laura	Normansell	Virgin Trains
Christopher	Norton	Railfuture NW
Chris	Nutton	First TransPennine Express
John	Owen	TravelWatch NorthWest
Alan	Palmer	Institute of Transport Administration
Stuart	Patrick	Friends of Rose Hill Station
Gillian	Pearson	Friends of Littleborough Stations
Phil	Pearson	
Matthew	Rawlinson	Preston Bus Ltd
Malcolm	Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Richard	Rollins	TravelWatch NorthWest
Mike	Rose	Railfuture
Phil	Rowbotham	Friends of Heaton Chapel
John	Ryan	Wirral Transport Users Association
David	Sidebottom	Transport Focus
David	Simper	Blackpool Council
Ian	Stuart	Friends of Altrincham Interchange
Ken	Swallow	Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport
Adrian	Swift	
Robert	Talbot	TravelWatch NorthWest
Elisabeth	Tasker	Stagecoach Manchester
David	Thrower	
Jeremy	Walker	Blackpool Council
David	Walsh	SE Lancashire Rail Action Partnership
Miriam	Walton	Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group
Stephen	Waring	Electric Railway Charter
Craig	Wright	SE Manchester Community Rail Partnership
David	Yates	Friends of Eccles Station
Tim	Young	TravelWatch NorthWest
Tony	Young	TravelWatch NorthWest