

promoting quality public transport.....

CONFERENCE REPORT

Wednesday 31st October 2012
Offices of Merseytravel, One Mann Island, Liverpool

Conference kindly supported by Merseytravel and First UK Bus

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Liverpool and thanked Merseytravel and First UK Bus for their generous support to the event. He went on to describe some of the work of TravelWatch NorthWest since the last conference.

Consultation responses had been provided for:

- Rail DeCentralisation (DfT)
- Rail Fares and Ticketing (DfT)
- Formalising the Rail Delivery Group (ORR)
- Government High Level Output Specification (HLOS) (Commons Transport Committee)
- Financial Issues in CP5 (ORR)
- PR13 Outputs (ORR)
- EU Bus and Coach Passenger Rights (DfT)
- Aviation Policy (DfT)

In addition TWNW has participated in a number of conferences and meetings as follows:

- TPE Stakeholder update (Manchester)
- CBI Conference (Chester)
- Wirral Transport Users Association
- TPE New Management Team
- Northern Rail Stakeholders event (Liverpool)
- British Transport Police Advisory Group (Manchester)
- Labour Party Conference transport related fringe meetings (Manchester)
- TravelWatch South West (Taunton)
- West Coast Rail 250 AGM (Flint)
- NW Chambers of Commerce Transport Group (Liverpool)

2. Welcome to Liverpool

Cllr. Joe Hanson, Member, Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority

Cllr. Hanson welcomed delegates to Liverpool and the new headquarters of Merseytravel. He explained the need for a good public transport system in Merseyside and how the network contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of Liverpool and its surroundings. He was pleased that positive investment had resulted in a safe, reliable and affordable system and referred to recent initiatives to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour emphasising the zero tolerance policy that had been implemented. He was also pleased with the interface that Merseytravel has developed with users of the system and mentioned the Customer Focus forums held every 3 months. In wishing the delegates a successful event he concluded by commending the planned investment in rail in the North West and endorsing Merseyside's full commitment and support to the projects.

3. Buses – there is a huge opportunity out there!

Giles Fearnley, Managing Director, First UK Bus

The Bus industry faces many challenges for the future, particularly with the increases in fuel costs which have risen over the years from 3% of turnover to almost 20% at present. The industry has no control over these costs but is striving to procure vehicles that are more fuel efficient, although this is a challenge, due in part to EU rules. Much liaison is taking place with drivers to engage in better driving techniques to optimise fuel efficiency. Public funding is also tight.

However the DfT is extremely supportive of the value of buses in the public transport matrix and significant funding streams from both central and local government have been welcomed. The value of the bus is in the ascendancy and good dialogue has been created with local authorities with many proactive partnerships being formed. Identified priorities include:

- Driving up standards
- Improving Journey speeds
- Punctuality
- Affordability

Notable changes to travel have included an extension of the peak to 10.00 am and a decline in travel to shops, but a new younger market has driven initiatives such as Wi-Fi equipped vehicles and now passenger satisfaction is at an unprecedented level.

The industry needs to achieve a better lobby with business groups and organisations and it is only in the last 5 years that it has got together to address this, notably though CPT, creating a coalition of partners and stakeholders with common goals. Research has indicated that there is need to engage with retail groups and other commercial business. Only 50% of businesses consider that bus availability has a role in recruitment and employment and only 20% consider it to be essential to their operations, with only 11% of employees reliant on bus for commuting. This set of anomalies needs to be addressed.

First Group has seen a massive transformation in its operations. These have included Driver CPC, driving techniques, vehicle presentation and route identities and branding. The company is working with partners in providing a variety of projects like Guided Busways, and it recognises that Highways Authorities are key partners. This attitude enables a proactive and mutually supportive approach to issues large and small. The North West is a vitally important market for First Group and it is 100% committed to operations in the region despite the recent sale of Wigan operations to Stagecoach. Recent initiatives include:

- £21 million investment in new vehicles
- Service delivery and training regimes
- Smartcard compatibility and technology
- Ticket and fares initiatives at key times and seasons
- Fare incentives aimed at reducing tariffs

Discussion followed and included references to integration across transport modes, fleet investment, timetable information, hybrid vehicles and reliability. Plus Bus was cited as a major initiative and in all matters it was acknowledged that the industry still has to address many challenges, but is on the right road.

4. TravelSafe on Merseyside

Phil Halewood, Head of Integrated Transport, Merseytravel

Crime and fear of crime results in an 11.5% reduction of rider-ship on trains and buses. Accordingly the safety of passengers and staff is a high priority for Merseytravel and the TravelSafe initiative has been introduced to bring all parties together to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on the public transport system. Its Mission Statement is:

“To work with parties to create a public transport system that offers the community opportunities to travel safely and without fear.”

The initiative is intelligence led and operates in partnership with the police and transport operators and as well as seeking to reduce criminal incidents it is encouraging staff and public to report crime. The data collected is analysed and evaluated and this translates into positive actions. In the last 5 years the number of incidents such as broken windows, missile throwing, and youth related crimes have been driven down by 75%. This has been achieved by community engagement through local forums and surgeries at bus depots to encourage crime reporting. Specific actions include:

- Unmarked vehicles tracking buses
- Plain clothes policing
- Revenue Protection
- Unannounced ticket checks
- Anti-drug operations on buses and at bus stops

Targeted reassurance campaigns to staff and passengers are achieved by publicity, leafleting, posters, postcards, information and display boards.

[North West Public Transport Users' Forum Community Interest Company trading as TravelWatch NorthWest](#)

Company No. 6181713

Registered Office: 11 Harvelin Park, Todmorden, Lancs OL14 6HX

12 Travel Community Support officers are engaged and are dedicated to the bus network. These personnel provide a high visibility presence, passenger and staff reassurance, deterrents to offenders, intelligence gathering and links with schools and community groups. The initiative is also linked with the national “Stop Hate” campaign offering a single contact point with confidential and tailored reporting. This also provides useful shared data and scoping for future challenges.

In discussion the role of the British Transport Police and Yellow School buses were mentioned. The BTP operates exclusively on the rail network and is funded by train operators, so achieving similar funding from bus operators is not practical. Merseytravel operates supported school buses but these are also accessible to all passengers, so dedicated yellow buses are not favoured.

5. A Radical Vision for the North & its Railways

Prof. Paul Salveson, General Secretary, Hannah Mitchell Foundation

The Hannah Mitchell Foundation campaigns for Regional Government in the North of England. This includes the aspiration to have control of the rail network and its operations. The organisation’s vision for railways in the North envisages a regionally controlled rail network with a degree of private investment.

The unprecedented investment in rail in England and Wales amounting £9 billion could release a number of opportunities if the will of the public sector in the North is there and prepared to grasp them. Transport links across the North are poor and inadequate and the region has suffered from under investment for years whilst other regions of the UK have seen disproportionate financing. Even the planned electrification programme falls short of destinations like Hull, Middlesbrough and Scarborough in the east and Barrow and Windermere in the west. Each of these lines would be easy to complete and afford the operation of a single class of trains thus easing operational issues. Reinvestment in rolling stock is also becoming urgent as, whilst new trains will be procured for the investment, there is silence on the need to replace the Northern Trains fleet which is almost life expired. Equally the opportunity to explore and potentially open new routes or reopen closed lines does not appear to be on the agenda.

The franchising system is flawed and affected by “short termism” and this affects all aspects of performance, particularly staff morale, towards the end of the franchise period. The costs of running the railways by the franchise system is 5 times more than in BR days, although a return to BR is likely unrealistic. Network Rail’s infrastructure costs are also out of control and too high, for example, a small 2 platform station costing £8 million.

The answer could lie in a coalition of Northern local authorities working together to form a Regional Public Transport Authority that could create its own High Level Output Statement (HLOS) and apply investment where it was required, in a similar vein to Scotland. This could seek out new opportunities with new and intensified cross border routes and a “Pan Northern” approach and also have control of infrastructure. Inter City services should then lie in the ownership of Government (given

the experiences that have affected the 3 main line franchises in recent years) with the rest of the network using a public/private sector partnership style.

In discussion the future direction was highlighted as important but it may take until after the 2015 General Election to find an agreed vision. Any Northern Transport Authority would need to embrace public and private sector involvement in its management.

6. Will Wind Farms blow Passengers away?

Dick Clague, TravelWatch, Isle of Man

The development of new wind farms in the Irish Sea will have a major effect on the ferry operations between the mainland and the Isle of Man, as the proposals would require a lengthy route extension to current operations. This will likely lead to reductions in the intensity of Isle of Man Steam Packet timetables and also limit the availability of alternative “bad weather routes.” There is concern on the Island that the longer journeys may result in a delay in freight supplies arriving on the island, consequently affecting everyday life as all supplies come in via the ferry routes. Retail businesses are particularly concerned as are tourism businesses, all of which form the backbone of the Island’s economy.

The timetable for development of the wind farms is currently out for consultation and the sponsoring companies are seeking approval by 2015, with construction commencing in 2017. The Isle of Man Council of Ministers is being actively lobbied by the business community on the island to seek acceptable solutions that will not affect the current shipping routes. However as the Island does not have powers to intervene in the UK planning process (as it is not a Crown dependency) it is seeking support from the mainland in its quest.

It was agreed that TOWN will support the efforts of the Isle of Man community as required in obtaining an acceptable solution.

7. Just a Minute Session

The “Just a Minute” session is designed to give delegates the opportunity to air views on issues that affect public transport in their locality. This requires views to be presented within a 1 minute timescale and subsequent discussion to be equally disciplined. The following issues were raised:

- The expansion of Merseyrail electrification to Warrington
- Northern “Oyster Card” – being considered by TfGM for 2014 – 17
- Use of road safety data in planning new bus routes
- New EU Passenger Rights from 18th December
- Expansion of electrified lines for freight
- Bus Fares information provision

Where representatives of companies were present they promised to take comments back. Other issues will be addressed by contacting appropriate bodies to seek further information.

8. Next Conference

Thursday 7th February at the offices of Transport for Greater Manchester including a visit to the new Metrolink tram depot at Old Trafford.

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Adam Patterson	Transport for Greater Manchester
Alison Chew	Transport for Greater Manchester
Beverley Gallier	Transport for Greater Manchester
Brian Walton	First in the North West
Cedric Green	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Chris Dale	TWNW
Chris Holmes	
Chris Jarvis	Institute of Transport Administration
Cllr Eunice Smethurst	Transport for Greater Manchester Committee
Cllr Joe Hanson	Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority
Cllr Lynne Holland	Transport for Greater Manchester Committee
Colin Barnett	Bus Users UK
Craig Harrop	Northern Rail
David Burton	SE Lancs Rail Action Partnership
David Butterworth	TWNW
David Evans	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
David Koring	Severn Dee Travel
David Squire	Network Warrington
David Simper	Blackpool Council
David Thrower	
David Wood	TravelWatch Midlands West
Dennis Harrison	Wirral Transport Users Association
Dick Clague	TravelWatch Isle of Man
Fred Consterdine	Crewe & Shrewsbury Passenger Association
Gabriel Drew	East Cheshire RUG
Geoff Kerr	
Giles Fearnley	First UK Bus
Ian Allsopp	Wirral Transport Users Association
Ian McDermott	
Janet Briggs	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Jeff Clayton	First in the North West
Jim Davies	
John Moorhouse	TWNW
John Aaron	
John Culshaw	Mattersons Cranes

John Hart	TWNW
John Mitchell	Wirral Transport Users Assoc./ Age UK Wirral
John Owen	TWNW
John Ryan	Wirral Transport Users Association
John Warner	Kendal & District Bus Users Group
Keith Pennyfather	
Ken McKelvie	Ramblers Association
Ken Swallow	CILT North West
Les Burton	Stagecoach Merseyside
Malcolm Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Mark Barker	Northern Rail
Martyn Davies	Merseytravel
Maurice Duckworth	First Rail Support Ltd
Maxine Myers	First TransPennine Express
Michael Breslin	Railfuture NW England
Michael Wrigley	STORM
Mike Laycock	Wirral Transport Users Association
Neil Caldwell	CILT North West
Paul Fawcett	TWNW
Paul Salveson	University of Huddersfield
Peter Garvey	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Peter Lamkin	Wrexham Birkenhead RUA
Peter Robinson	TWNW
Phil Halewood	Merseytravel
Philip Harrison	
Phillipa Kirby-Girdlestone	Confederation of Passenger Transport
Robert Talbot	TWNW
Roger Barton	Goyt Valley Rail Users Association
Roland Graham	North West Active Travel Network
Russell Warhurst	University of Chester
Sandra Dutson	RoadPeace NW
Tony Fawthrop	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Tony Young	TWNW