

Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport

promoting quality public transport.....

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Thursday 9th October 2014
 Offices of Merseytravel, Liverpool**

Conference kindly supported by Merseytravel & Stagecoach, (Manchester & Wigan)

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Liverpool and began by referring to the recent death of former Chairman, Peter Robinson. John Owen gave a short tribute to Peter's work for TWNW and the many other organisations with which he was active and this was followed by a short period of silent respect.

Chris then introduced Malcolm Conway as a new member of the Board. He referred to the work that had dominated TWNW business in recent weeks which included:

- Response to the DfT consultation on the TPE and Northern franchise renewals
- The introduction of evening peak fares in city regions
- Cuts in subsidised bus services and the effect on communities and economies
- The future of Community Transport and its resilience to replace service bus services

2. Welcome to Liverpool

Cllr Liam Robinson, Chair of Merseytravel

Cllr Robinson welcomed delegates to Liverpool and paid tribute to the work of TWNW which he and his colleagues valued greatly as it is the only independent passenger representation body and is vital to communicate passenger needs and issues to operators, procurers and managers. He referred to what he believes is an exciting future in transport with the Rail North and One North initiatives bringing public and private sectors together across the North to have major influence on all aspects of economic development and transport links between major cities. He cited that current cross country public transport in the North was unacceptably slow and complex and solutions need to be found to achieve better interconnectivity. He also mentioned the campaign to get a HS2 dedicated line into Liverpool, accepting that it brought challenges, but was important if Liverpool is to have sufficient rail access for the future.

3. Merseytravel – Present and Future

Frank Rogers, Deputy Chief Executive, Merseytravel

Frank began by introducing the 5 strands of work that were currently taking some priority in Merseytravel.

Bus Quality Partnerships – began in 2009 with Arriva and Stagecoach and concentrated on 6 key corridors featuring timetable coordination, inter-availability of tickets, infrastructure improvements, new vehicles and marketing, and measurement of the resulting customer benefits. A “better bus” area proposal was being worked up on routes between St. Helens and Widnes.

Long Term Rail Strategy – The Liverpool city region is experiencing major change in employment patterns, residential issues, regeneration projects and consequent growth. The working population is increasing along with the age profile and these are predicted to bring greater demand to the transport system. Growth in rail usage is predicted to increase by at least 100% by 2043. A set of rail priorities is being worked up to maximise the potential and provide a clear vision for the 2nd half of the century. Committed schemes awaiting final approval of the Combined Authority include the Halton Curve (£104 million), Newton le Willows interchange (£14.4 million) and Maghull North (£6.2 million).

Rail North – Working together with the DfT and partner local authorities. Work commissioned on alternative options for rolling stock finance and procurement.

HS2 – Liverpool is to be connected to HS2 line via Crewe but it is seeking to be fully locked in by direct connection to recognise the opportunity for growth in the region. Original government planning data on population and economic growth was under-estimated and a study has been submitted to government aiming to secure an improved HS2 offer. A dedicated website “Linking Liverpool” has been created to promote the case.

One North – The UK economy is unbalanced with London and the South East dominating. This partnership project is seeking to improve transport connectivity between the 5 city regions of the North by improvements to rail, highways, local connectivity and robust links to HS2 routes.

Discussion and questions topics ranged through:

- Smart ticketing – On the agenda of One North and a major aspiration
- Imbalance of rail investment between the North & the South – sympathetic noises from government with one North seeking major intervention and investment to rival Crossrail’s £1.5 billion and talk of Crossrail 2
- Liaison between Rail North & Network Rail - trying to develop interface and achieve a joint strategy
- Connections to the North and Scotland – a key challenge and addressed in 30 year strategy but need to recognise Lime Street station’s access limitation

4. Stagecoach – Achieving Excellence

Chris Bowles – Managing Director, Stagecoach Manchester & Wigan

Stagecoach follows a customer focussed business model under the lead heading “Excellence is a Perpetual Search” recognising that customers seek continuing value and quality.

The company has embarked on a long term investment plan which features pricing, products and people. Research has indicated that London prices are up to 60% higher than the North but even so, some fare packages had been reduced. Use of Smart and on-line ticketing is increasing but most passengers still preferred to use cash. In Manchester many frequencies had been doubled but across the city a 4% fall in passengers had been recorded, probably due to the increase in the Metrolink network. In contrast significant increases had been recorded in Wigan and Liverpool.

Investment has also taken place in employee engagement with improved channels of communication resulting in overall improvement of services and customer interface, better bus depot and general staff facilities.

Challenges in the future include public funding cuts, the imbalances of the Concession schemes which put pressure on all operations, and congestion caused by highway maintenance and works management affecting punctuality. Good dialogue and liaison is required in all of these issues but often it doesn't occur and must be improved by all parties. It is vital that work takes place in partnership with local authorities and this must be effective and workable. In Manchester an agreed Code of Conduct is in place involving all operators of public transport modes which has a shared vision and ethic of working together. The bus priority strategy in Manchester is in sharp contrast to the bus lane debacle in Liverpool.

Journeys are now taking longer and in the last 15 years, 800 timetable changes have had to be made in the Manchester region due to changing demand and road use. However they deliver £64 million of spending to the High Street.

Future priorities will revolve around:

- Customer Service on and off the bus taking in driver attitude and clean vehicles
- Recognising shifting aspirations of bus users and local authorities
- Embracing technology including Smart ticketing, WiFi provision, Real time information, vehicle positioning systems.
- Safety with a robust maintenance regime
- Environment care both internal and external embracing fuel and energy efficiencies and reducing carbon emissions
- Recognising the role of the bus in wider and growing economies
- Expanding the range of customer services and products to meet modern demand

5. “Just a Minute”

Issues raised by delegates

The Just a Minute session included issues raised on Wirral Waters, the Liverpool Bus Lane project, passenger liaison in Liverpool and Manchester and the evening off peak fare restrictions recently imposed. This latter item provoked the main discussion as, whilst it was

recognised that it was reasonable to apply a peak fare to passenger flows out of cities, it had unwittingly also been applied to inward travel (unlike London) thus penalising the leisure passenger using trains for access to theatre, sports and cultural events and nights out. This will have an effect on the evening economy and perhaps lead to more car use. Matthew Worman, Client and Stakeholder Manager, Northern Rail said that the changes had been accepted reasonably well by customers. However It was felt that the issue still needed to be addressed.

6. High Speed Rail in the North West ***Ian Jordan, Director of Phase Two, HS2***

The Objective of the HS2 project is to support and re-balance the UK economy. It will be expected to alleviate the strain on the current rail network, provide better South East – North connectivity, drive local regeneration integrating with growth plans and relieve the South/North economic imbalance. The UK population is expected to increase by 10 million in the next 20 years and this will further contribute to pressure on the rail network which will be unable to cope. HS2 will provide a relief to the consequent overcrowding and free up space on the classic network for increased freight movement.

£10 billion worth of contracts have been let in the supply chain for construction of HS2 with 50,000 people employed. The Crewe hub and interchange will open up the North West connectivity and consideration of an East – West link is currently the subject of a government inspired study in collaboration with Network Rail with a report to be published shortly.

Discussions and questions topics ranged through:

- Environmental Concerns – All potential stakeholders need to support the case for HS2
- Use of existing East – West routes including those currently closed
- Connectivity between terminals of HS2 and local services
- Potential of linking HS2 with HS1 in London
- Fare levels – decisions yet to be made but not planned for HS2 to have premium fares
- London interchange for Heathrow & Crossrail – Old Oak Common may be an option.
- Manchester Airport station location too remote – very important key market so still under consideration but high cost of tunnelling a factor

7. A Vision for Rail – Creative Partnership Working and Community Rail ***Sally Buttifant, Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership Officer***

Community Rail Partnerships involve local people working to assist the development of local and rural routes, stations and services and getting the community involved in improving the railway environment. 40 million journeys per year are taken on Community Rail lines and the aims of the partnerships are to increase revenue by encouraging greater use of trains, reducing costs, increasing recognition and awareness of the train services and supporting social and economic development.

4000 volunteers are involved in the partnerships contributing almost 2 million hours of time equating to a value of £27 million. Partnerships involve train operators, local authorities, local organisations, transport agencies, local project leaders, tourism bodies and private

sector representatives. However there is still an amount of apathy in certain sectors that are challenging to engage with and encourage.

Examples of successful projects are:

- Scholar Cyclist priority project
- Published scenic walks from stations
- Station events marking anniversaries such as Hooton/Helsby 150
- Commemoration events such as WW1 remembrance
- Art display projects for stations involving local artists

In discussion the recent study on train usage and passenger flows on the Furness Line, inspired by the business and social communities to support the retention of through services in new franchises, was highlighted as being assembled by the Community Rail Partnership as the only body capable of independent delivery. It was suggested that a "Toolkit" be supplied to CRP's to help them engage with local private sector businesses to inspire participation.

6. Next Conference

Thursday 12th February, 2015, Storey Institute, Lancaster.

Attendance

Name	Organisation
<i>Adrian Swift</i>	
<i>Alan Wilson</i>	<i>Kendal & District Bus Users</i>
<i>Angus Tilston</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Barry Dobson</i>	<i>Arriva Merseyside</i>
<i>Brian Grey</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Cedric Green</i>	<i>North Cheshire Rail Users Group</i>
<i>Chris Bowles</i>	<i>Stagecoach Manchester & Wigan</i>
<i>Chris Dale</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Chris Holmes</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Chris Smyth</i>	<i>Heritage Railway Association</i>
<i>Cllr Liam Robinson</i>	<i>Merseytravel</i>
<i>Colin Barnett</i>	
<i>Colin Kennington</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Craig Harrop</i>	<i>Northern Rail</i>
<i>Craig Wright</i>	<i>Goyt Valley Rail Users Association</i>
<i>Darren Kirkman</i>	<i>Merseytravel</i>
<i>Dave Koring</i>	<i>Severn Dee Travel Ltd</i>
<i>David Butterworth</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>David Culshaw</i>	<i>Friends of Hindley Station</i>
<i>David Evans</i>	<i>Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association</i>
<i>David Huber</i>	
<i>David Thrower</i>	
<i>David Wood</i>	<i>TravelWatch Midlands West</i>
<i>Dennis Harrison</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Frank Rogers</i>	<i>Merseytravel</i>

<i>Fred Consterdine</i>	<i>Crewe & Shrewsbury Passengers Association</i>
<i>Geoff Kerr</i>	
<i>Ian Allsopp</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Ian Jordan</i>	<i>High Speed 2</i>
<i>Janet Briggs</i>	<i>North Cheshire Rail Users Group</i>
<i>Jim Anderson</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>John Culshaw</i>	<i>Mattersons Lifting Equipment</i>
<i>John Moorhouse</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>John Nicholas</i>	
<i>John Owen</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>John Ryan</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>John Sellars</i>	<i>Goyt Valley Rail Users Association</i>
<i>Keith Pennyfather</i>	
<i>Ken McKelvie</i>	<i>Ramblers Association</i>
<i>Ken Swallow</i>	<i>Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport</i>
<i>Lillian Burns</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Louise Ellman MP</i>	<i>Chair, House of Commons Transport Committee</i>
<i>Malcolm Conway</i>	<i>Lakes Line Rail User Group</i>
<i>Malcolm Richardson</i>	<i>Blackpool & Fylde Rail Users Association</i>
<i>Margaret Mitchell</i>	
<i>Matthew Andrews</i>	<i>Passenger Focus</i>
<i>Matthew Worman</i>	<i>Northern Rail</i>
<i>Maxine Myers</i>	<i>First TransPennine Express</i>
<i>Mike Laycock</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Norman Adams</i>	
<i>Peter Lamkin</i>	<i>Wrexham-Birkenhead Rail Users Association</i>
<i>Philip Briggs</i>	<i>North Cheshire Rail Users Group</i>
<i>Philip Harrison</i>	
<i>Richard Lysons</i>	<i>Friends of Littleborough Station</i>
<i>Rob Jones</i>	<i>Stagecoach Merseyside & South Lancs</i>
<i>Robert Mason</i>	<i>Blackpool Transport Services Ltd</i>
<i>Robert Talbot</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Sally Buttifant</i>	<i>Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership</i>
<i>Sheila Dee</i>	<i>Chester - Shrewsbury Rail Partnership</i>
<i>Stuart Edwards</i>	<i>Passenger Focus</i>
<i>Tony Young</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>