

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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

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

## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2015 - Merseytravel, One Mann Island, Liverpool**

**Conference kindly supported by Merseytravel and Transport Focus**

### **1. Introduction**

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Liverpool and thanked Merseytravel and Transport Focus for their generous support to the Conference. He began by highlighting a number of issues that had exercised TWNW recently and these included:

- Supporting Kendal Bus Group in the light of un-notified alterations to local services.
- Considering and responding to the latest round of bus service cuts in the region.
- Issues with rolling stock, particularly the proposed migration to the South of 170 and 323 class trains without any apparent replacements.
- Farnworth Tunnel engineering progress.
- Removal of railcard holder concession by Virgin Trains

He described meetings and events he had attended on behalf of TWNW since the last Conference in June which included:

- West Coast Rail 250
- Real-time Information Conference
- Various local passenger users groups
- TOC Stakeholder events
- Viva Rail refurbished London Underground train trial
- Rail North Strategy Conference
- Manchester Victoria re-opening
- Attendance at Political Party Conferences

He had also carried out his ongoing governance work as Chairman as well as keeping the TWNW Facebook page up to date publishing almost daily articles on issues affecting passengers and had now opened a presence for TWNW with “Linked-In” where articles will also be published.

### **2. Welcome to Liverpool**

***Cllr. Liam Robinson, Chair, Merseytravel***

Cllr. Robinson welcomed delegates to Liverpool. He valued the dialogue and liaison that TWNW provided on behalf of passengers and was pleased to be able to continue

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Merseytravel's support for the organisation. He referred to the opportunities presented by Transport for the North which had now been formally incorporated as a statutory body. He was also delighted to announce that Merseytravel's current CEO, David Brown, had been appointed to the post of the organisation's first CEO. He went on to explain the role that Rail North was taking a management role in the award of the new franchises for Northern and Trans Pennine trains. Merseyrail is investing in a new fleet of trains to replace its current fleet and it will be in service in the early 2020's. Capital projects include the Halton Curve to be completed in 2018, a new station at Maghull North, a new transport hub at Newton le Willows, the Walrus card SMART ticketing project (which will be only the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the UK after Oyster), and a new objective in bus operations targeted at young people up to age 19 offering fare reductions and designed to be attractive to the next generation.

### **3. Merseytravel – Prospects and Major Events**

***David Brown, Chief Executive***

***Liz Chandler, Director of Corporate Development***

David Brown described the new Transport for the North organisation. It has a budget from the government and is concerned with multi-modal transport issues, for both public transport and road and freight movement. It will oversee information systems and operations as well as all related transport aspects.

Rail North will continue to effectively lobby government for support of transport throughout the Northern region and will oversee and manage the 2 train franchises (to be announced in early December) for Northern and Trans Pennine services. Its plan of priorities will be based on what stakeholders want and the devolution from central government will enable a bringing together of a clear strategy based on a customer focus. Its future planning will be based on a 5 to 10 year outlook.

The new fleet of trains for Merseyrail, which will come into operation in the early 2020's, are being designed in response to customer needs and will feature a modern design, comfort, and passenger experience.

Liz Chandler then described Merseytravel's approach to the many major events that occur in the area each year. A Major Events Transport Board has been established and it has instigated a strategy to provide a clear governance structure in planning and event management involving a coordinated structure of commercial need and organisation. Lessons have been learned from other parts of the UK in major event planning (notably the London Olympics events) and the Board has enabled a cross partner decision making environment. It has specific groups to focus on transport segments including bus and rail travel as well as highways. Decisions are reached by evidence based forecasts of attendance, travel patterns, and data from previous history in Merseyside and elsewhere.

For the 3 Queens event in 2015, a number of challenges were identified. These included the fact that it was an "unticketed" event so attendance was unpredictable, it took place on Spring Bank Holiday Monday so a large volume of people could be expected, and with late night events also taking place, getting people home would be important. A series of initiatives were undertaken to promote the spread of transport options including:

- a "reactionary" bus operating model with vehicles being directed on a flexible basis to points of demand and need,

- strengthening of Merseyrail trains and Northern/TPE services with additional shuttles, additional stops and contingency services, which required a strong customer focus,
- a traffic management plan promoting options for park and ride/walk
- a promotional strategy to encourage visitors to plan their travel utilising broadcast and print media, PR, advertising and social media,
- a transport control centre to identify and solve problems and issues.

On the day it was estimated that over 1 million people visited the event, 400,000 travelling by train and monitoring has exhibited a high degree of satisfaction and enjoyment of visitors.

#### **4. Virgin West Coast Trains**

##### ***Gary Iddon, General Manager, North West and Wales routes***

Virgin West Coast Train's business is split into 3 regions – West Midlands, Anglo Scottish and North West and Wales. The latter segment, which includes Liverpool, Manchester and North Wales services, accounts for 50% of the business.

The current franchise is due for renewal in March 2017 although an option exists for a further 1 year extension. Preparations have commenced for the next WCML franchise period and Virgin is working on a long term growth strategy. At present 34.5 million journeys are taken per year and this is forecast to grow to 50 million by 2026. Currently, whilst the train services are busy overall, 50% of the train capacity requires promotion and marketing by fare incentives, advertising, PR and other methods.

The fleet of trains are made up of Pendolino units which travel 18.5 million miles per year and Voyager units which travel 5.9 million miles per year. Recently the 9 coach Pendolino trains have been refurbished to provide increased standard class accommodation.

Customers are at the heart of operations and satisfaction surveys result in over 500 responses per day. The company benchmarks its satisfaction data with other customer service organisations to try and achieve optimum results and is able to differentiate results specifically by route, train and day. Recent and planned customer improvements include:

- Auto delay repay for advance on-line fare customers.
- Increased capacity of 5500 standard class seats on trains by conversion of Coach G.
- £20 million pre-franchise change station improvements at Coventry, Stoke, Crewe, Preston and Stafford.
- Automatic ticket gates at Stockport, Crewe, Man Picc., Stoke, Rugby, Coventry, London Euston, Birmingham New Street and International.
- New services to Shrewsbury and Blackpool.
- Better WiFi with increased reception strength on trains and at 17 stations.
- Increased engagement with local communities.
- Welcome Host staff at Man Picc., Crewe, Stoke and Stockport.
- Additional automatic ticket machines.

Reference was made to the withdrawal of the concessions for railcard holders travelling in peak periods. The decision was made to simplify the fares structure and brings Virgin in line with the rest of the industry. Railcard holders can still obtain peak time discounts by

advance booking. It was acknowledged that the decision is unpopular in some quarters and all feedback is being considered.

## **5. Just a Minute**

The Just a Minute session included issues raised on the regular failure to collect fares on trains, the need for proper transport planning in new housing development, customer relations of bus companies as new communities develop, the potential for new rail routes in the light of the Borders railway development, delays in the electrification programme, and the relationship and interface between public transport and “active” travel such as cycling and walking.

## **6. Liverpool John Lennon Airport – Progress and Aspirations** ***Robin Tudor, Head of PR and Communications***

Liverpool John Lennon Airport has 500,000 arriving passenger per year and receives services from 60 destinations in the UK and Europe. It supports 4500 full time equivalent jobs and contributes £175 million to the local economy. It also supports the visitor economy to the level of £134 million. Peel Group is now the sole owner of the Airport and a major investment programme is planned for the next 5 years.

2015 has been the first year of growth since 2011 with a 6% increase in passengers to 4.2 million and a further increase is forecast to 4.5 million in 2016. 80% – 90% of passengers are travelling for leisure. Many improvements have been made with passenger transit through the airport and these have been acknowledged in benchmarking projects with other peer airports. A customer based board has been established to listen to feedback from airport users.

New and additional services have recently been introduced to and from Belfast, Edinburgh, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Bacau, Cluj, Prague, Riga, Warsaw and Gdansk. Plans are in place to provide extra services from 2016 to and from Barcelona, Zakynthos and Palma. Worldwide destinations can also be served by dedicated connecting flights to and from Amsterdam and Dublin. The potential for further routes are being explored by offering Liverpool as a destination for airlines based overseas and expansion of charter operations.

Improvements to ground transport are being achieved by an Overview and Delivery Plan which updates the Access Strategy. Road improvements with bus priority and revised drop-off/pick up facilities as well as improvements to bus stops and shelters are all being introduced adjacent to the terminal and the closeness of the car park means passengers can access terminals quickly and conveniently. Liaison and dialogue with train operators is ongoing and the completion of Halton curve will open access to and from North Wales. It is acknowledged that further improvements are required to connecting transport from Liverpool South Parkway and Warrington Bank Quay and this is under consideration in line with financial implications.

## 7. Transport Focus

### *David Beer, Passenger Executive*

Transport Focus is the statutory government body representing users of rail, bus and tram services across England outside London. In April 2015 it was given the added responsibility for users of strategic roads.

The 2014 passenger Satisfaction Survey revealed the following headline results:

	<b>Rail</b>	<b>Bus</b>	<b>Tram</b>
Overall	81%	88%	90%
Value for Money	46%	63%	61%
Punctuality	77%	77%	83%
Frequency	76%	-	80%
Passenger Accom.	64%	87%	74%

Key themes for rail passengers are right time performance and transparency of published data. During times of disruption the major issues are the flow of information to passengers, a capability to estimate time of delay and real time information. Actively addressing these issues will lead to an enhanced “trust” factor.

For bus passengers the main issues are information on causes of delay to punctuality, better information and communication (particularly from drivers), and real time information at bus stops. A better training regime to improve passenger interfaces is desirable.

Transport Focus has supplied evidence based data to the re-franchising of Northern Trains and Trans Pennine Express following liaison with passengers and stakeholders. Priorities the research revealed were value for money, capacity, frequency, punctuality, and quality.

In its new responsibility for strategic roads these are identified as motorways and major “A” roads. Key stakeholders are Highways England; DfT; ORR; AA; RAC; Freight Transport and Road Haulage Asscn. Motorised users are identified as freight, cars, motorcycles and caravans with non motorised users identified as cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders.

Initial research has revealed that priorities for attention are road surfaces, driver behaviour, and better management, of road works, delays and information. The results of a current satisfaction survey, using an innovative approach will be published next year.

## 8. Next Conference

Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2015, at the offices of Transport for Greater Manchester

### **Attendance**

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Name

Organisation

Adrian Swift

Alan Mayor

Lancaster & Morecambe RUG

Alan Wilson	Kendal Bus Users
Ann Marie Slavin	RATP Dev UK and Selwyns Travel Ltd
Barry Dobson	Arriva Merseyside
Brian Grey	Wirral Transport Users Association
Cat Dowell	Transport for Greater Manchester
Cedric Green	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Chris Dale	TravelWatch NorthWest
Chris Holmes	TravelWatch NorthWest
Chris Jarvis	Institute of Transport Administration
Clyde Raine	Friends of Heaton Chapel Station
Colin Barnett	
Colin Kennington	TravelWatch NorthWest
Craig Harrop	Northern Rail
Craig Wright	Goyt Valley Rail Users Association
David Beer	Transport Focus
David Brown	Merseytravel
David Burton	SELRAP
David Culshaw	Friends of Hindley station
David Thrower	
David Wood	TravelWatch Midlands West
Dennis Harrison	Wirral Transport Users Association
Elisabeth Tasker	Stagecoach Merseyside and S Lancashire
Fred Consterdine	
Gary Iddon	Virgin West Coast
Geoff Kerr	
Harry Boardman	Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association
Ian Allsopp	Wirral Transport Users Association
Ian Stuart	
Ian Watson	
J Baldwin	Transport for Greater Manchester
Janet Briggs	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Jim Anderson	Wirral Transport Users Association
Jim Davies	
John Aaron	
John Berry	Ormskirk, Preston, Southport Travellers Assoc.
John Bone	
John Culshaw	Mattersons Cranes
John Hart	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Hobbs	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
John Moorhouse	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Nicholas	
John Owen	TravelWatch NorthWest
John Ryan	Wirral Transport Users Association
Judie Collins	
Kathy Jones	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Keith Pennyfather	
Ken McKelvie	Ramblers Association
Ken Swallow	Chartered Inst. of Logistics and Transport NW
Leonard Green	TravelWatch NorthWest
Cllr Liam Robinson	Merseytravel

Lillian Burns	TravelWatch NorthWest
Liz Chandler	Merseytravel
Malcolm Conway	TravelWatch NorthWest
Malcolm Richardson	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Margaret Anderson	Wirral Transport Users Association
Mark Barker	
Michael Breslin	RailFuture North West England
Mike Laycock	Wirral Transport Users Association
Mike Machin	Lancaster & Morecambe RUG
Mike Owen	
Paul Grant	Lancaster & Morecambe RUG
Peter Lamkin	Wrexham Birkenhead Rail Users Association
Phil Pearson	Network Warrington
Phil Rowbotham	Friends of Heaton Chapel Station
Philip Briggs	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Richard Rollins	TravelWatch NorthWest
Rob Jones	Stagecoach Merseyside and S Lancashire
Robert Talbot	TravelWatch NorthWest
Robin Tudor	Liverpool John Lennon Airport
Roger Bell	Ormskirk, Preston, Southport Travellers Assoc.
Roland Graham	North West Active Travel Network
Roy Greenhalgh	Network Rail
Sarah Cunningham	First TransPennine Express
Selwyn Jones	Selwyns Travel Ltd
Simon Reynish	Chartered Inst. of Logistics and Transport NW
Stephen Jones	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Steve Gilholme	Transport for Greater Manchester
Tony Young	TravelWatch NorthWest