

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

promoting quality public transport.....

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Thursday 18th October 2018
 Offices of Merseytravel, Liverpool**

**Conference kindly supported by Merseytravel,
 & Stagecoach, Merseyside**

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale, welcomed delegates to Liverpool and thanked Merseytravel, Arriva North West and Stagecoach Merseyside for their generous support to the Conference.

He began by referring to TravelWatch North West's Annual Review for 2017/18 which set out the work of the organisation and incorporated the Business Plan 2019 – 2021. The year had been a difficult one for all public transport sectors and he called for Transport for the North to be given greater authority and devolution to allow it to be the lead body in control of all transport matters in the North.

He went on to highlight the ongoing issues of Northern Rail services which had continued to suffer cancellations, particularly in Cumbria, as well as the industrial action that was showing no sign of resolution. The recent compensation announcements fell a long way short in value and he hoped that more would be available to affected passengers in due course. TOWNW had responded to the Transport Committee's inquiry into the May timetable fiasco highlighting all these points and many more.

The future of the Bus industry continued to be of concern with further threats to rural services due to incremental withdrawal of subsidies and a general downturn in bus passenger numbers. TOWNW had responded to the DfT's consultation on Accessibility emphasising the need for better information provision at stops and on vehicles as well as the need for more transparency on fares. He also deplored the trend of gradual withdrawal of printed timetable information by bus companies emphasising the ongoing need for passengers.

He mentioned the 16 meetings that he and colleagues had attended on behalf of TOWNW since the last Conference covering all aspects of transport issues in the North West.

Finally he paid tribute to Lillian Burns and Leonard Green who had elected to retire from the Board of Directors and thanked them for their support over many years.

2. Merseytravel's Ambitions

Cllr. Liam Robinson, Transport Portfolio Holder

Cllr. Robinson began by stating that an integrated public transport network is key to economic growth. Merseytravel looks after the transport needs of 1.5 million people with a further 900,000 living in the travel to work area.

He called for Transport for the North to be given greater devolved powers and a multi year transport budget to provide for key highway route network upgrades, franchised bus services, special rail grants and community involvement in future transport issues and provision. He also felt that HS2 would be a vital link for Merseyside offering accelerated services and bringing £15 billion in economic growth. However he emphasised the need for an East-West route across the North to be as high a priority as the North-South route. The recent opening of the deep water berth is forecast to double the port's freight capacity and by importing through a northern port, 150 million HGV miles will be saved. However the supporting transport infra-structure is now vital.

Rail links are being strengthened to allow greater accessibility to the city region viz:

- Halton Curve – links to North & South Wales
- Maghull North Station – completed and now proving popular
- Newton le Willows Parkway – completed by end of 2018
- Direct services to/from Scotland – from May 2019
- Northern's new trains & services – from May 2019

A new rolling stock fleet for Merseyrail, owned by Merseytravel, will be introduced from 2020 following a £450 million investment. As well as providing state of the art operational facilities they will provide "gap free" level access at platforms. A mock up will be able to be viewed at Lime Street from 5th November.

Future aspirations will feature a Liverpool Central upgrade where footfall had doubled over last 10 years, Access for all at all stations, Bidston – Wrexham line 30 minute service and extension to Liverpool and a rail link to Skelmersdale.

Buses provide for 80% of public transport journeys and a business case is being worked up for a more dynamic and inclusive bus alliance. £40 million had been invested in new vehicles and bus stop information points were planned. A new ticketing initiative targeting under 19's with offers of reduced fares had resulted in 142% growth in travel from this sector.

The Tunnel's now offer a local residents discount toll for off peak travel and a "fast tag" system is being examined. A new Mersey ferry has been procured and will arrive soon and a cycle network is in development along with a number of cycle hire schemes.

3. Passenger Operator of the Year *Andy Heath, Managing Director, Merseyrail*

Merseyrail's vision is to deliver a world class railway to the Liverpool region with modern trains, value for money fares, good accessibility, and community involvement. It has a 25 year concession running to 2028 and operates a profit share scheme that has returned £25 million to the city region since 2012. It has a ppm of 95.2% and is 2nd in the national rail value for money league table. It was the 1st operator to win 3 awards as Passenger Operator of the Year, Excellence in Customer Service and Sustainable Development. At the recent "Giants" event it was able to run a special timetable and carried 30% of all visitors to Liverpool for the weekend.

A new train fleet will arrive in 2020 to replace the current 40 year old fleet. It will offer 50% more capacity on the system, doubled CCTV coverage, at seat USB sockets, and reductions in journey times. It will also be capable of operating under battery power offering the potential to extend the network to Wrexham, Warrington and Skelmersdale. The wider project is part of a £460 million investment that will bring 1000 new jobs, £70 million value to the economy, platform upgrades and a new accelerated timetable by 2021.

SMART ticketing will be on full offer from 2022 with the Walrus card (equivalent to London's Oyster), and Saveaways on Smartcard retailed from all staffed stations.

Local Community involvement has seen the recruitment of 100 volunteers and 47 stations adopted.

A discussion period followed in which the following issues were aired:

- Rail franchising – needs review to offer longer periods (25 years)
- Rolling Stock – ROSCO market needs review – prefer franchise ownership
- Tram/Train potential – a future potential for expansion
- Liverpool Airport Rail link – needs fundamental growth in airport passengers
- Spatial planning – transport a vital consideration
- Bus Lanes removal – mixed results; looking at priority routes and potential for more park & ride

4. Points of View

This session provides an opportunity for delegates to raise any matter they wish to on public transport issues in the region. The following matters were raised and debated:

- Cycling provision in town & city centres – good planning to reduce car usage
- Network Rail - a new approach with passengers at the core of plans
- Burnley Manchester Road – need for better cross platform access
- Bus franchising – mixed views forthcoming from various sectors
- SMART Cards – potential to join up North West a good aspiration but fraught with difficulty

5. The Merseyside Bus Alliance

Richard Thor – Arriva Merseyside, Rob Jones – Stagecoach Merseyside, Matt Goggins, Merseytravel

80% of public transport journeys in Merseyside are taken by bus. This accounts for 137 million journeys per year, 14% of which are for travel to work. Patronage grew over the last year following the introduction of the Young Persons travel initiative.

The Alliance is currently a partnership between Merseytravel, Arriva North West and Stagecoach Merseyside. It is hoped that other operators will join in the future. The strategy that was launched in 2016 set out a 15 year vision with aims to grow patronage by 20%, improve the travel experience and reduce the reliance on support from the public sector.

Stagecoach operates from 4 depots in Merseyside employing 1200 staff and operating 420 vehicles, all of which are under 7 years old. 40 million passengers per year are carried, 17.7 million miles are travelled and 40% of the fleet comply with Euro 6 emission policies. The company runs with a Programme Board and a Stakeholder Board. The work-streams are design, ticketing, travel experience, punctuality, performance measurement and targets. The company's growth target for 2014-17 was 10% but was actually 18.2%. It recorded a satisfaction score of 92% and value for money of 70%.

Arriva has 7 depots and employs 2055 staff. It carries 70 million passengers per year and records a 91% satisfaction score. It carries out regular network reviews sectorised in Sefton, Liverpool and Wirral. Bus stops have been upgraded and a single point customer contact centre has been established. Huyton bus station has seen major investment and a number of priority routes have been introduced including the 500 service to Liverpool Airport via South Parkway and the 86 night bus. All buses offer WiFi connectivity and it hopes to go to fully contactless ticketing by next year. It has seen major growth in young persons travel following a number of incentive events and the new ticketing promotion.

Subsequent discussion included;

- On board and bus stop electronic information – expensive but an aspiration
- Fare differences between the 2 companies – different commercial and investment models
- Concessionary Travel – from age 60 in Merseyside with top up subsidy from local authority
- Point to point fares – company's commercial decisions

6. Northern Rail – Challenges and Progress

Raj Chandarana, Stakeholder Manager, Central Region, Northern Rail

The May 2018 timetable had ambitions to provide 2000 new services with the completion of the Bolton corridor electrification and increased frequencies. In reality the delay to the completion of the engineering works resulted in an urgent re-write of the timetable in a quarter of the normal time it takes which resulted in the problems experienced since. Northern's application to roll-over the previous timetable was rejected by Network Rail and the DfT. In April a further delay was

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

announced with a 6 month line closure. 450 drivers had to be re-trained on route knowledge outside the planned period and this resulted in a temporary timetable from June reducing services by 6%. each day.

Northern has provided full cooperation with the ORR review into the events and has carried out extensive stakeholder, public and media engagement. A recovery plan is now in place and cancellations have reduced but are still significant. A series of compensation offers have been put in place in liaison with Transport for the North and these will be extended in dialogue with stakeholders.

The train fleet Modernisation Plan is moving on well with 98 new trains being introduced next year, the first of which are on test on the WCML, and 243 existing trains being fully re-furbished. Improvements are also taking place at stations and the case for platforms 15 and 16 at Manchester Piccadilly is being amplified.

Industrial relations continue to be a challenge with strikes taking place every weekend at present. Northern are anxious to resolve matters and are hopeful of a deal in the not too distant future.

It is hoped that the current reviews into the difficulties will lead to greater appreciation of the effect on the travelling public and bring lessons to the industry for future planning. Additionally the importance of the rail operations to the Northern economy will receive heavy emphasis and it is clear that politicians are beginning to take greater interest.

Discussion time was limited but included an acknowledgement that Cumbria was a special case for compensation, having experienced more cancellations than elsewhere.. Also Sunday working issues remained a union agreement that is hopefully being resolved.

7. Next Conference

Thursday 7th February 2019, Manchester

Attendance

Name	Organisation	
<i>John</i>	<i>Aaron</i>	
<i>Norman</i>	<i>Adams</i>	
<i>Ian</i>	<i>Allsopp</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Jim</i>	<i>Anderson</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Margaret</i>	<i>Anderson</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>David</i>	<i>Armstrong</i>	
<i>Colin</i>	<i>Barnett</i>	
<i>Robin</i>	<i>Bence</i>	

<i>Karen</i>	<i>Bennett</i>	<i>Community Rail Lancashire</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Berry</i>	<i>Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Assoc.</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Bone</i>	
<i>Christopher</i>	<i>Bowles</i>	
<i>Michael</i>	<i>Breslin</i>	<i>Railfuture NW</i>
<i>David</i>	<i>Burton</i>	<i>SE Lancs Rail Partnership</i>
<i>David</i>	<i>Butterworth</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Neil</i>	<i>Caldwell</i>	<i>CILT</i>
<i>Raj</i>	<i>Chandarana</i>	<i>Northern Rail</i>
<i>Roy</i>	<i>Chapman</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Frederick</i>	<i>Consterdine</i>	
<i>Ian</i>	<i>Conway</i>	<i>Lakes Line Rail Users Group</i>
<i>Malcolm</i>	<i>Conway</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Vicky</i>	<i>Cropper</i>	<i>London Northwestern Railway</i>
<i>David</i>	<i>Culshaw</i>	<i>Friends of Hindley station</i>
<i>Chris</i>	<i>Dale</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Jim</i>	<i>Davies</i>	<i>Lancaster Bus Users Group</i>
<i>David</i>	<i>Evans</i>	<i>Blackpool & Fylde RUA</i>
<i>Tony</i>	<i>Fawthrop</i>	<i>GMTC</i>
<i>Stephen</i>	<i>Forde</i>	<i>Manchester Community Rail Partnerships</i>
<i>Alan</i>	<i>Goater</i>	<i>Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group</i>
<i>Matt</i>	<i>Goggins</i>	<i>Merseytravel</i>
<i>Roland</i>	<i>Graham</i>	
<i>Cedric</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>North Cheshire Rail Users Group</i>
<i>James</i>	<i>Harkins</i>	<i>All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group</i>
<i>Dennis</i>	<i>Harrison</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Hart</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Andy</i>	<i>Heath</i>	<i>Merseyrail</i>
<i>Richard</i>	<i>Hoare</i>	<i>Arriva North West</i>
<i>Chris</i>	<i>Holmes</i>	<i>CILT</i>
<i>Rob</i>	<i>Jones</i>	<i>Stagecoach Merseyside & S Lancs</i>
<i>Colin</i>	<i>Kennington</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Fred</i>	<i>Kennington</i>	
<i>Dave</i>	<i>Koring</i>	<i>Severn Dee Travel Ltd</i>
<i>Peter</i>	<i>Lamkin</i>	<i>Wrexham- Bidston Rail Users Association</i>
<i>Mike</i>	<i>Laycock</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Lobb</i>	
<i>Richard</i>	<i>Lysons</i>	<i>Friends of Littleborough station & STORM</i>

<i>Kenneth</i>	<i>McKelvie</i>	<i>Ramblers Association (Merseyside & W Cheshire)</i>
<i>Margaret</i>	<i>Mitchell</i>	
<i>John</i>	<i>Moorhouse</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Sue</i>	<i>Mullen</i>	<i>Confederation of Passenger Transport</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Nicholas</i>	
<i>John</i>	<i>Owen</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Phil</i>	<i>Pearson</i>	
<i>Malcolm</i>	<i>Richardson</i>	<i>Blackpool & Fylde RUA</i>
<i>Martin</i>	<i>Robinson</i>	
<i>Liam</i>	<i>Robinson Cllr</i>	<i>Merseytravel</i>
<i>Richard</i>	<i>Rollins</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Ryan</i>	<i>Transport for Greater Manchester</i>
<i>John</i>	<i>Ryan</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Richard</i>	<i>Stanton</i>	<i>Virgin Trains</i>
<i>Ian</i>	<i>Stuart</i>	<i>Friends of Altrincham Interchange</i>
<i>Ken</i>	<i>Swallow</i>	<i>Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport (NW)</i>
<i>Adrian</i>	<i>Swift</i>	
<i>Robert</i>	<i>Talbot</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Angus</i>	<i>Tilston</i>	<i>Wirral Transport Users Association</i>
<i>Miriam</i>	<i>Walton</i>	<i>Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group</i>
<i>Ian</i>	<i>Watson</i>	
<i>Tim</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>Campaign for Better Transport Lancs</i>
<i>Tony</i>	<i>Young</i>	<i>TWNW</i>