

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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

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

Transport Committee  
 House of Commons  
 London SW1A 0AA

18<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Committee Members,

## **Coronavirus: implications for Transport**

1. TravelWatch NorthWest is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in North West England. We are pleased to give our views to this inquiry.

### ***General Issues***

2. The major problem we see is the return to public transport. Current discouragement to use public transport and social distancing measures do not bode well for people to be attracted back in the medium term. With home working currently widespread one view is that there will not be a headlong rush back to the environmentally unsustainable practice of people working in the artificial environment of the office, with their huge buildings, and acres of glass, consuming resources and energy.

3. The environmental benefits from lock-down and increased working from home have been huge and will encourage a greater shift towards maintaining much higher levels of cycling and indeed walking.

### ***Buses***

4. The impacts of social distancing are being acutely felt and there is a need to get people back to using buses to avoid increased road congestion and for environmental reasons. The competition for space on our streets and roads and the greater demands for cycling and walking space will require a considered approach to ensure that bus priority does not lose out. Although cycling could be a factor in reducing traffic congestion thus helping bus services, there will still be a continuing need for increasing bus priority, not diminishing it even further.

5. Some parts of the country, notably Greater Manchester, are looking at greater local authority control of bus services. It will be interesting to see whether the implications of coronavirus will reinforce the principle of greater public control.

### ***Trains/ Light Rail***

6. The current advice to travel only for essential purposes and the mandatory use of face coverings is markedly constraining the level of train travel. Potentially longer trains will be necessary to provide space whilst observing social distancing. The emphasis towards more walking and cycling which has become more popular during lockdown leads to the need for better integration between modes. This should include a re-look at previously largely negative policies on the carrying of bicycles on trains and indeed on light rail. The importance of the whole journey experience and the need for more convenient transport interchanges and hubs cannot be understressed.

7. The pandemic has raised awareness of environmental issues. In order to attract people back to rail post Covid, investment, such as electrification & increased capacity, making rail more attractive and geared to environmental and carbon lowering aims should be prioritised.

8. Some long-distance operators are not currently issuing walk up tickets for travel. There are fears that this could be used to make a permanent change. The walk up railway is essential for many, especially commuters and others, with unpredictable journey patterns, often using long distance services for short journeys. An example is Macclesfield to Manchester where if compulsory seat reservations on Avanti West Coast persist, many passengers will be forced on to already crowded Northern and CrossCountry trains, adversely affecting social distancing on those trains instead.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond

Yours sincerely,

*John A Moorhouse*

John Moorhouse, Company Secretary