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2040 Strategy
Transport for Greater Manchester
2 Piccadilly Place
Manchester
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23rd September 2016

Dear 2040 Team,

Consultation on Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040.

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in NW England. We are pleased to give our views as follows on the above consultation.

1. Introduction

1.1 We generally welcome and support the key principles of this strategy. We are avid proponents of public transport and the contribution it can make to reducing road congestion and contribute to the environment. The passenger interest is key from our perspective and there is a long way to go to make public transport sufficiently appealing to attract more of the vast number of car users. We touch on this in more detail in our response.

1.2 We always advocate passengers' rights and input to the services that they use. This does not appear to be covered in the strategy. As the strategy unfolds consultation with users on issues such as the creation of bus partnership and franchising agreements, routing, timetables, fares levels and investment in infrastructure would serve to further passengers' interests and draw on the wide experience that public transport users possess.

2. Integration

2.1 The emphasis on Integration (p.14) is very welcome but the record in Greater Manchester to date has been poor, as is tacitly acknowledged in the paper (para. 40). To take some examples concerning Metrolink which could be sorted relatively easily - there are still no announcements on trams of interchange with trains although some trains (TPE) do announce connections with Metrolink. There are still no Metrolink timetables available and not even a network map. From the point of view of visitors to the city who are unfamiliar

with the system information could be improved. We have noticed that many passengers do not appreciate the distinction between Piccadilly Gardens and Piccadilly stations. It would be clearer if on tram announcements stipulated Piccadilly station (not just Piccadilly) to avoid confusion. The Victoria – Piccadilly journey should be recognised as a major link for longer distance travellers and announcements/ information should be clearer in this respect.

2.2 Still staying with Metrolink and rail, through and integrated ticketing could be improved as follows -

- Enable tickets to be purchased from Metrolink stations to any national rail station outside Greater Manchester (e.g. Bury to London).
- Include travel on Metrolink for National rail tickets routed via Manchester originating or finishing outside Greater Manchester and involving a change of station between Piccadilly and Victoria (e.g. Littleborough to Congleton)
- Address routing anomalies as the system grows. For example a ticket from Hebden Bridge to Oldham would assume route via Victoria rather than the more convenient change at Rochdale. It could be cheaper to buy separate tickets in these circumstances.
- Secure recognition of Metrolink by National Rail Enquiries especially given there are through fares from rail.

2.3 The ambition to support integration of transport with spatial planning (p.20) is welcomed but again past experience suggests this will be difficult to achieve. New development is inevitably determined primarily by commercial pressures for car access which do not reflect the needs of public transport. TfGM's own record is frankly not good, e.g. moving the bus station further away from the shopping centre in Rochdale while car users can park literally on the roof with direct access under cover to shops. Bus users have to walk across roads and up a steep hill with no weather protection.

3. Bus Services

3.1 Policy 20 on bus priorities (p.37) is urgent as bus speeds are reducing and reliability worsening. A greater level of segregation is needed using segregated busways (not guided), bus only streets and roads in addition to conventional bus lanes. (This is covered in para.169). Bus priorities should be engineered using similar standards as for segregated tramways.

3.2 The Vision for Bus (p.45) comments on the difference in bus patronage between Greater Manchester (GM) and London but does not seem to recognise the key factors, namely bus deregulation and passenger information. London bus stops have real time departure information and buses have real time visual and audible bus stop information. Despite many requests from user groups for similar provision in GM, the only examples we know of to date are on the Leigh guided busway and on Metroshuttle. Visual and audible information covering stopping patterns and next stop should be fitted to all new vehicles as standard as per the London model. Departure information in bus stations is limited and is not real time.

3.3 Other factors are a simpler network, higher frequencies, better service levels in evenings and weekends and a more comprehensive night bus network. Fares should be more transparent and with comprehensive inter availability amongst operators. At present, single-operator ticketing means that a return or multi journey ticket is not always available on all services on the route - we have noted passengers being refused travel due to having other operators' tickets.

3.4 Again, from a passenger's point of view, complaints procedures are currently not well publicised. We would like to see a notice prominently displayed in all vehicles used on Registered Local Services explaining how and to whom comments and complaints can be made and giving contact details of the appeals procedure. The Bus Appeal Body's current remit with regard to complaint handling is very limited. ***It is not a statutory body.*** We understand that its terms of reference only permit it to deal with complaints from bus users regarding specific incidents or operational matters such as running to time, charging the correct fare and the behaviour of staff towards passengers. It cannot deal with commercial or operational matters such as the level of fares, the level of service provided, or the routes taken by buses.

4. Light Rail

4.1 We clearly support 'Our 2040 Rapid Transit strategy' (p.50) and welcome the completion of the current network. We question the extension of the Trafford line to Port Salford and consider extending to Urmston may be more cost effective, serving existing development rather than speculative future development. The definition of Rapid Transit (p.52) fails to include the most important characteristic, namely a segregated right of way. We support the development of tram-trains where these can provide significant improvements for passengers. A reservation would be that the benefits of being part of the national rail network should not be lost and also the provision of toilets on longer journeys.

4.2 See also our comments on integration with Metrolink above.

5. Heavy Rail

5.1 We support the development of heavy rail services (p.54) which have been neglected in recent years. There is an urgent need for capacity increases, station upgrading, service level increases, further electrification etc. Some of this is included in Policy 29 (p.55).

5.2 We are not convinced that the prospect of new trains in the future, welcome though this is, will adequately cater for the ongoing growth in demand. Prospective passengers are already (and have been for some time) discouraged from using rail because of full to capacity trains at peak times and grossly inadequate car parking space at many stations. We understand that the design of the new trains for Arriva Rail North will comprise self-contained 2 and 3 car sets with no end corridor connections. This is less flexible and convenient for passengers compared with most current designs

running on Northern (except for Pacers which are going) that have end gangway connections.

5.3 Seating capacity /length of trains needs to be tackled – this implies longer platforms at many stations. Bus/ rail integration could also be vastly improved. There is an urgent need for enhanced track capacity improvements to permit more trains and to permit freight which does not interfere with passenger services.

5.4 In terms of in-train facilities, two specific and basic necessities demand detailed attention -

- Toilets on trains – there is a need for a standard seat/ number of toilets ratio - anecdotally there are probably too few now and their condition and operational functioning can often be suspect.
- Leg room – this seems to have progressively worsened over the years in many cases – a philosophy of cramming more seats in to save on the number of carriages needed (often with detrimental effects on luggage space) with attendant cost savings.

5.5 “G.2 Better rail services to Manchester Airport from the south” (p.67). We are disappointed that the Western Rail Extension is not being pursued. It would significantly improve the capacity of the Airport station and open new route options to Cheshire and North Wales.

5.6 We support HS2, more for its capacity increase than high speed. We have always felt the use of Euston as a terminus to be problematical, especially in respect of onward travel and the advantages of through running to HS1. We have also previously said that there must be a total regeneration of local and regional lines to connect to HS2 and main lines with modern, comfortable, reliable and efficient rolling stock. HS2 stations should adjoin conventional stations for ease of transition to local/regional rail services.

5.7 The problem with the proposed HS2 Airport Station is that it is located on the western side of the M56 and will require a bus or tram journey to reach the airport. In this eventuality it may well be quicker to travel to Piccadilly and take a train to the Airport.

5.8 “Transformation of Piccadilly Hub” (p.80) refers to “potential rail tunnel proposals”. This appears to be the first mention of rail tunnels. “Long term (from mid 2030s)” (p.82) refers to “potentially through tunnelled metro services” in the 2030s. Manchester has a long history of failed tunnel projects, most recently the Picc-Vic tunnel in 1977. The need for tunnels is no less urgent now, GM is probably the only conurbation in Europe with no rail tunnels of any kind. Tunnel options for heavy and/or light rail should be investigated now; they should be implemented long before 2030. The Ordsall Chord will only give a marginal capacity increase and a heavy rail tunnel will be needed in the short to medium term. Implementation will take a minimum of ten years so a start needs to be made now.

5.9 Many stations need upgrading, and we agree that “many of Greater Manchester’s rail stations do not meet customer expectations, in terms of the facilities offered” and that this “deters some users”. We urge that consultation with passenger groups takes place when improvements are planned. For example the newly refurbished Manchester Victoria station is spectacular with its iconic new roof. However the general condition of the gloomy platforms 3 - 6 leaves much to be desired, with poor overall level of lighting, lack of on platform seating and generally faded overall ambience. Also the overall roof does not cover the whole of platforms 1 & 2 and a substantial area where trains stand is open to the elements. (The Metrolink platforms have shelters outside the roof cover).

6. Looking outside Greater Manchester

6.1 There appears to be little tangible reference to Manchester's outreach. Manchester is an important commuting destination from miles beyond its borders in all directions and this should be recognised in any strategic planning. The document covers City to City links but it should more recognise the importance of Manchester to non-city areas of the North, many of which regard it as the regional and northern capital. Manchester's outreach stretches to an area bordered by Carlisle, N. Wales, the east coast, Stoke on Trent and Shrewsbury as well as the Isle of Man. This is a substantial outreach area and goes beyond the NW region and it is more than just urban and city areas.

6.2 To give an example submitted by one of our members it is understood that it is intended to no longer run the direct Manchester Airport train from Southport and this is felt to be a retrograde step. Anyone wishing to travel to the Airport or South Manchester for hospitals, theatres, shopping etc. would need to change trains - not a very good option with luggage and children and the uncertainty of getting a seat on the next train.

7. Passenger representation

7.1 To add to 1.2 above, Transport Focus has a statutory role in this area but as a national body it is limited in getting involved in regional and local issues. The TravelWatch network, which endeavours to fulfil this role, does not cover the whole of the country and is not formally supported. With increasing emphasis on public transport and greater attention to political devolution perhaps now is the time to look again at properly resourced regional representation to more effectively hold public transport providers and operators to account.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond

Yours faithfully

John A Moorhouse

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary