

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

Tel 07807 768124
 Email: admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk
 Website: www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk
 Correspondence address – 11 Harvelin
 Park, Todmorden, OL14 6HX

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promoting quality public transport.....

Cameron Jones
 West Coast Partnership
 4th Floor Capital House,
 25 Chapel Street,
 London,
 NW1 5DH

6th May 2020

Dear Cameron,

High Speed Service Development West Coast Partnership Development Strategic Market Report – Stakeholder Survey

TravelWatch NorthWest is an independent Community Interest Company representing public transport users in North West England. We would like to give our views on this stakeholder survey which has been brought to our attention.

We are giving an overall view of the markets and opportunities as we see them in NW England rather than following the question and answer pattern of the survey document. Three general comments -

- We support HS2 but it is extremely unfortunate that whereas we understand that rail operators believe that through stations are more efficient than terminating stations, HS2 has terminating stations at every major location: Euston, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds.
- Service levels on the existing West Coast Main Line must be kept at a good frequency between centres of population not served by HS2 in order to maintain connectivity. Specifically, research shows that passengers prefer not to change trains as far as possible.
- HS2 must be an integral part of the rail network. The importance of good connecting services with the conventional railway cannot be overemphasised. The process of connecting should be made as simple as possible, with cross platform access as far as possible, lifts and assistance with heavy luggage. In conjunction with this there should be a more relaxed policy with regard to connections. Where it is sensible and with minimum time penalty the holding of connections

especially where service intervals are lengthy should take precedence over incentives to avoid penalties for late running.

- Fares on HS services should ideally be in line with that of the existing railway network to attract the many leisure travellers and there should be the flexibility of inter-availability with conventional services.

For other comments we have split the routes involving our region as follows -

Lancashire & Cumbria

Through services with London are vital to serve the important markets of Lancashire and Cumbria the Lake District (thinking of Oxenholme and Penrith), particularly as far as the latter is concerned the leisure market. Leisure travel, we believe, comprises at least 80% of the total number of WCML passengers, north of Lancaster. Additionally, Oxenholme the Lake District produces more passengers with London than do Penrith and Carlisle combined. (both these were Virgin Trains statistics). Please remember also the designation of the Lake District as a World Heritage Site and the vital importance of encouraging access by public transport to the region rather than the private car.

In phases 1 and 2a, we would advocate that Oxenholme and Penrith as important leisure use stations will require, as a minimum, 2-hourly conventional links with London for periods, hourly at others, with the caveat that the current quite unacceptable gaps at Oxenholme of 3 hours are plugged. Penrith is also an important feeder location for Carlisle.

In terms of speed it may well be that the Penrith/ Oxenholme to London journey time would be marginally quicker with a change to a following HS2 train at Preston, but given that most of the passengers are in the leisure category, a few minutes is of little importance compared with the inconvenience of changing trains and the uncertainty of getting a seat for the major part of the onward journey, especially at times of disruption. Additionally the intermediate markets on the WCML to the South such as Milton Keynes are important.

In phase 2 there could be an option of extending what we believe is an hourly HS service terminating at Lancaster to Carlisle, calling at Oxenholme and Penrith.

An essential consideration is capacity on the WCML north of Bamfurlong. There must be significant capacity enhancements carried out to this crucial section of the route to cater for HS and conventional services. Passenger growth will require this anyway and HS2 will add to that growth.

Use of alternative routes for freight and for diversions, such as the Settle & Carlisle line (given suitable upgrading) would be desirable and particularly so during the period of work needed to upgrade the WCML and create more

capacity north of Preston. The use of rail replacement road transport is a poor substitute for passengers and we have long campaigned to keep passengers on trains to the greatest possible extent. The timing of such work is also critical. Conventionally this has tended to be at holiday times which is the worst possible time for the predominantly leisure majority of travellers north of Preston. This should be re-examined.

A further ambition of ours not strictly related to HS2 but which would be closely linked with capacity issues is the retention of through cross country services between all WCML stations north of Crewe and the south coast/south west, These were lost some years ago, with the consequent instant loss of many passengers because of an enforced change of trains en route. The traffic level with these destinations has never totally recovered.

Liverpool and Chester/North Wales

We assume that the provision of an HS service to Liverpool will create a half hourly frequency with the capital which is to be welcomed. We understand that Chester & North Wales do not feature in current HS2 service plans. Chester is an important railhead with a footfall of around 5 million and an HS service would be a benefit, possibly with splitting at Crewe. We are very supportive of the Crewe hub concept. Crewe has been and still is an important hub for services to many parts, i.e. further North, Merseyside, Manchester, North Wales, the Welsh border area and the Potteries. It is essential to continue these links with HS2. Local and regional services need to be sufficient to provide seamless connections from HS2 services to the many areas served from Crewe, some of which have very poor levels of service at present. Prime examples are Merseyside, Manchester Airport and North Wales.

Manchester routes

We understand that Stockport and Wilmslow will be served by HS trains in phase 1 and 2a. Whilst beyond the scope of this exercise we are concerned that the full phase 2 train service specification will effectively divert all HS services in this route to call at the new Manchester Airport station. Stockport is a very popular station for London destinations and has a footfall of some 4.5 million. These stations should continue to have good quality through links with the capital originating from Manchester.

I trust this has been useful. Thank you.

Yours faithfully

John A Moorhouse

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary