

MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE NORTH WEST PUBLIC
TRANSPORT USERS' FORUM held on SATURDAY 11th FEBRUARY at
MANCHESTER AIRPORT.



06/1/1F Introduction

The Chairman welcomed delegates and members of the public. He explained the role of the Forum for the sake of new attendees. He expressed thanks to personnel at Manchester Airport who had provided facilities for this meeting and to NW Development Agency who had provided valuable financial support during the first year of the Forum's existence as an independent organisation. The NWPTUF is part of the PTUF movement, other organisations currently being in the South West and East and West Midlands. The primary purpose of this meeting is to look at surface access to NW regional airports, primarily Manchester and Liverpool.

06/1/2F Attendees and apologies

Those attending and those who tendered their apologies are listed at the end of these minutes.

06/1/3F Minutes of the Forum held on 22nd October 2005

These were accepted as a true and correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

06/1/4F Matters arising:

- a. 05/3/6F – Rural Transport Problem. The previous Forum decided to widen this issue as it is a national problem. There is support from the other Forums and a paper is in the process of being prepared by Paul Fawcett (NW) and David Thornhill (EM), to be disseminated widely.
- b. 05/3/8F – Multi Modal Ticketing Report. The report has been published and has been well received, especially by GMPTF. The report picks out 'best practice' in multi modal ticketing, especially with regard to publicity. Comments were invited.
- c. 05/3/9F – Rail Replacement Bus Substitution. Keith Pennyfather has produced a draft report, a précis of which was enclosed with the papers for the Forum. Comments were invited (by the end of February) in advance of the final report being adopted as Forum policy.

06/1/5F Public Transport Links with Airports

1. Manchester International Airport (MIA) –

Bob Longworth (BL), Ground Transportation Manager

- § Surface access is one of the key capacity issues, essential for continued growth.
- § Development is dependent on government policy and the attitudes of independent transport providers.
- § Airports are now seen as major interchanges for journeys other than by air. This stimulates the growth of public transport which aids the overall provision for air passengers.
- § MIA currently handles 22 million passengers per year, expected to grow to 40 million in 10 years. The workforce is around 20,000 (28,000 in 10 years).
- § Transport highlights have been the opening of the rail station in 1993, the southern rail connection in 1996 (likely to be better used in the near future), the ground transport interchange in 2003 improved conditions particularly for bus and coach passengers.
- § There are aspirations for a third platform in 2008 and in the longer-term the arrival of Metrolink. The airport is firmly committed to Metrolink.
- § 7.5% of air passengers reach the airport by rail, mainly by direct trains, with significant growth in 2004 following introduction of TPE services. The aim is to increase the modal share to 12%, i.e. 6 million passengers coming in by train. The new TPE trains will be an added incentive.
- § The present capacity of the station is a major constraint, with the third platform being essential for long-term growth. There is a strong business case for this.
- § Fast ticket machines have been installed within MIA to encourage arriving passengers to use the train for onward travel. There is also a plan to use e-tickets.
- § Local bus provision is essential for supplying passengers and workers, especially from the south. The Skyline partnership involves all the local operators.
- § 10% of employees use the bus to reach MIA.
- § Experiments with demand responsive services in early morning, with three year programme planned.

- § Real time information services are being provided.
- § Coach provision (mainly national Express) complements rail and bus provision. Around 250,000 passengers per year come by express coach and bus services.
- § The provision of a self-service check-in facility has stalled due to the after effects of terrorism incidents but it is hoped to resume this in the future.
- § Finally the contrast was made between the 'bog standard' bus provision and the new purpose interchange built to a high standard.

2. Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJL) – Robin Tudor (RT), Corporate Affairs Manager

- § LJL is now a major base for Ryanair who now have 18 destinations (soon rising to 20).
- § Easyjet is expressing interest in running additional services from LJL.
- § Around 4.5 million passengers used the airport in the year to September 2005.
- § LJL is one of the fastest growing airports in Europe.
- § It is no longer an airport just for Liverpool residents but now a regional gateway facility.
- § LJL has set up an Airport Transport Forum to develop public transport improvements at the airport. It has proved to be very successful in promoting the new links.
- § It is unlikely that a direct heavy rail link will be provided in the foreseeable future, due to infrastructure constraints.
- § In the medium term public transport access will be by bus.
- § Many new bus services have been introduced, in contrast to the sparse service originally provided.
- § 'Care Bears' provide customer care for bus passengers from the airport.
- § The provision of Liverpool South Parkway (LSP) is crucial to the further development of public transport access.
- § LJL fully supports the retention and development of the Halton Curve, to enable passengers to access the airport from west Cheshire and North Wales.
- § The 10% target of passengers reaching the airport by public transport has been achieved.
- § Employees are encouraged to use public transport but this is proving to be a real challenge. An incentive scheme may be used to encourage modal shift.
- § Public transport is important but commercially it is car parking which provides massive income (the biggest single source of revenue) for the airport. This presents a management dilemma in reconciling the advantages of access by public transport and the income from car parking.
- § Members of the Forum and the public in general are invited to make comments and suggestions on future aspirations for public transport access to and expansion of LJL.

3. Liverpool South Parkway Interchange (LSP) – Mal Ferguson (MF), Merseytravel

- § LSP will replace the existing Garston and Allerton stations which offer poor facilities and are badly situated. It will open in June 2006.
- § It is situated about three miles from LJL, with a connecting shuttle bus journey of about 10 minutes.
- § In addition to trains to Liverpool and Southport there will be trains to Oxford Road (2 tph) and Birmingham (1 tph). From December there will be services to Nottingham and, maybe, Norwich (subject to confirmation).
- § The shuttle bus from LSP to LJL will have three possible routes which will have bus priority measures. The driver will decide on which route to take according to traffic conditions.
- § There will be a 240 space park-and-ride provision, together with space for 16 taxis and 70 bicycles in a secure area.

4. Questions / comments

- § Cedric Green (North Cheshire Rail Users Group) commented on the poor access from North Wales and requested that a greater degree of urgency be put into restoring the Halton Curve and suggested that the Ellesmere Port – Helsby line services be extended to cater for Wirral passengers. MF replied that a forthcoming report will recommend a major study be carried out into the viability of services via the curve. RT agreed that it would create an important strategic link. The timescale of 2011 is looked upon as too long. As always, funding is a huge problem.
- § Ian Edwards (Friends of Eccles Station) asked if trains passing through Eccles could stop to allow local people to access MIA. BL referred to the serious capacity problems both in Manchester and at MIA. The increased number of station calls is a disincentive to longer distance passengers. Train access to MIA tends to favour longer distance passengers.
- § Peter Davies (Railfuture) asked if there was a possibility of introducing a direct rail service from the Carlisle and east Cumbria via Settle and Clitheroe to MIA. BL reiterated the capacity problem in and around Manchester.
- § David Koring (Crewe and Shrewsbury Passengers Association) commented that people from his area often travel to MIA and LJL (because of the nature of the services offered) yet find it difficult to reach them by public transport

as trains do not run very late at night or very early in the morning, which are generally times when access to airports is required. What can be done to make travel to airports be available 24 hours a day? (Responses below.)

- § Peter Robinson (NWPTUF) agreed with the aspiration for 24 hour access. Access by rail from outlying parts of the North West to LJL is almost impossible. He suggested a coach link from Preston. BL pointed out that a 24 hour service does operate on certain TPE routes and to Blackpool but an increase generally may not be supportable due to maintenance constraints. RT commented that there may not be a business case for a widespread increase given that each service will carry relatively few passengers. Does just a handful of people justify the operation of a rail or coach service from more distant parts seven days a week? In the long term there are improved prospects for travel to LJL from parts of the region not currently served by direct public transport but progress is slow.
- § Graham Price (North Cheshire Rail Users Group) commented on the high level of ignorance by travel agents regarding rail services to regional airports. He urged a programme of awareness raising among travel agents and potential users of the availability of public transport connections. RT agreed that many travel agents do not promote public transport but pointed out that many of LJL's customers book via the web which offers public transport options. BL commented that in his experience travel agents choose to ignore even MIA and send their customers down to London. Any promotional work done with travel agents is rapidly lost due to staff turnover. The future lies in direct sell via the web.
- § Andrew Macfarlane (Mid-Cheshire Rail Users Assoc) welcomed the provision of LSP but wanted to ensure that there would be good co-ordination of information given that there will be a number of operators' trains using the station. RT agreed that there will be a need to good co-ordination in information provision at the new station.
- § Robin Field (CTC) commented on the poor provision for cyclists at LJL. MF commented that there are some cycle lanes in the LSP area but agreed that the current provision is minimal. RT commented that many cyclists use LJL and take their bikes with them on the plane. Good terminal facilities actually exist at the airport itself.
- § Leo Goodwin (TPE) responded by saying that MIA is a key business priority for TPE, with a continued campaign to promote awareness. The number of TPE customers travelling to MIA has grown by over 50% over the last two years. Discussions are continuing with Merseytravel with regard to possible calling patterns of TPE services at LSP after December 2006.
- § John Moorhouse (NWPTUF) summed up by thanking the contributors of the three excellent presentations. There is clearly a will on the part of the airport authorities to promote public transport and good examples of high quality provision. Questions still remain regarding 24 hour provision. The NWPTUF must not just be a talking shop but must ensure that projects are taken forward. There are plans for an evidence based survey into passenger requirements for public transport provision to regional airports. Additional views from attendees were invited.

06/1/6F NWPTUF Update

- a. Business Plan and funding – Comments were invited. Funding is being sought from regional sources. Persons with influence were encouraged to remind their contacts of the existence of the NWPTUF.
- b. Community Interest Company – The NWPTUF is looking into the possibility of setting up as a CIC. There will be an update at the next meeting.
- c. Bus and Coach Corridor study – The study, produced by NWPTUF, has been well received by the NWRA. It will form a technical appendix to the draft regional spatial strategy. The latter will go out for public 12 week consultation in March 2006. The Forum may wish to contribute to the strategy.
- d. Kendal Bus Users' Group – Peter Robinson reported that a users' group has been set up in response to the threats to Kendal's bus services. A grant has been received from Cumbria CC. There has been a positive response by CCC to support the local buses in the medium term. The group has agreed to examine such matters as methods to increase passenger numbers, the poor state of the bus station and the interiors of some buses, all of which may be a disincentive to travel. The Chairman thanked Peter for his work in this matter. He commented that the Forum offers an opportunity to encourage the formation of appropriate public transport user groups.
- e. Cheshire Bus Strategy – The contributors to the strategy, Chris Dale and Keith Pennyfather, were thanked for their work. The NWPTUF has responded to the strategy. Copies are available from John Moorhouse.
- f. Area representation – Ian Watson has agreed to be the NWPTUF representative in north Cumbria on a trial basis.

06/1/7F Rules of Procedure

The changes to Rules of Procedure, previously circulated with the meeting papers, were agreed.

06/1/8F Passenger Focus

John Mooney gave an overview of the new Rail Passengers Council, now known to the public as Passenger Focus (PF). John acknowledged the previous good work done by members of the now defunct Rail Passengers Committees but emphasised that Passenger Focus is a new organisation with a clear focus on passengers. PF now undertakes the production of the National Passenger Survey. The Autumn 2005 survey indicates that there has been a steady improvement in most areas of provision which materially affect passengers.

There are now 12 Passenger Link Managers across the country. He introduced David Sidebottom who is responsible for liaison with Northern Rail, Merseyrail and Hull Trains. A list of all the PLMs will be circulated via John Moorhouse. The primary role of PF is to fully understand the needs of passengers. PLMs will work with train companies to rectify problems identified by passengers (normally by means of surveys). PF also has a role in influencing long-term decisions being made by the railway industry which will directly affect passengers, e.g. fares policies and the outcomes of Route Utilisation Strategies (RUS).

PF will also explain to passengers what their rights are, having discovered that there is widespread ignorance.

The long-term focus of PF is on RUSs and franchising, also on fares and the potential de-regulation of Savers. PF will pay much attention to the North West RUS in the next few months. Key issues are:

- § congestion, especially for passengers on trains but also on the network as a whole;
- § pricing of the provision of rail services by Network Rail, as a means of levelling out the peaks and troughs;
- § possible 'bustitution', the replacement of some rail services by buses, especially as the Railways Act 2005 has given PTE's the powers to do so;
- § franchising of Central Trains and Cross Country (around October 2006).

Subsequent questions included:

- § What steps can be taken to defend Savers? The problem is to be highlighted by Peter Robinson later in the meeting but consultation will take place by PF in the manner explained above.
- § Is there a case for a National Railcard? Again, research will be carried out by PF.
- § What say will passengers have regarding proposed closures? PF believes that the recent regulations produced by DfT (as part of the Railways Act 2005) create a stronger opportunity for passenger involvement. We must judge this by what happens when the first closure proposal is made.

06/1/9F 'Five Minute Slots'

Robin Field (CTC) outlined the current weaknesses and opportunities in using cycles to reach public transport bases. The provision of cycle storage at rail and major bus stations varies widely, as does accommodation on trains themselves. It is generally very good on Northern services but less so on those of Virgin (as reservations must be made and space is limited). Accessibility at stations varies. He noted that the National Passenger Survey asks passengers to assess space for luggage but there is no mention of space for cycles. He urged public transport operators to take bikes much more seriously.

Peter Robinson (NWPTUF) addressed the perceived threat to Saver tickets. They have been available since the 1980s as an incentive to off-peak travel and are generally available as walk-on returns for journeys over 50 miles. Over the years the time of day during which Savers may be used has been narrowed. The Saver ticket is the only fare subject to price control and is the only reasonably priced walk-on ticket. Peter fears that any replacement will not be regulated and may be TOC specific, with restrictions being placed on alternative routes. Hence the railway could become unattractive for walk-on passengers due to massively increased costs of travel or unreasonable restrictions. He urged the Forum to express serious concerns to government and MPs.

Brian Johnson (Virgin Trains) responded by pointing out that there are now some excellent book-ahead tickets (up to 18.00 the previous day). The current price regulation of RPI -1% is causing concern to many TOCs as their income is reduced in real terms year by year. Virgin would like to see the price cap removed. He agreed that there is a need for an affordable walk-up ticket to maintain the competitive element. John Owen (NWPTUF) remarked that there needs to be a complete analysis of all ticket types and fares charged to include consideration of promotional and incentive ticketing, carnet tickets and the national rail card.

The Chairman advised individual groups to make representations but asked for and obtained a show of hands that the Forum should also express concerns on the dangers of changes to Saver tickets

Next meeting of the Forum

Saturday 10th June 2006 in Lancaster

The meeting closed at 13.30 and was followed by lunch kindly provided by Manchester Airport.

DJB/TPC 02/06

PRESENT

Agate	Charles	Public Transport User
Barker	Mark	Northern Rail
Barton	R N	Goyt Valley Rail Users Association
Boyd	Ian	Halton Borough Council
Briggs	Janet	NWPTUF/TPC
Burns	Lillian	Campaign to Protect Rural England
Butterworth	David	NWPTUF/TPC
Byrne	Paul	Transport 2000 - Merseyside
Consterdine	J	Transport Consultant
Conway	Malcolm	Lakes Line RUG
Crossley	Preva	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Cuff	Janet	Ramblers Association
Dale	Chris	Bus Users UK
Davies	Peter	Railfuture - Yorkshire
Dawson	Peter	STORM
Edwards	Phil	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Edwards	Eoan	Friends of Eccles Station
Evans	David	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Fawcett	Paul	NWPTUF
Ferguson	Mal	Merseytravel
Field	Robin	CTC & Blackburn/Darwen Disabled Access
Garrett	A T	Wirral Transport Users Association
Goodwin	Leo	TransPennine Express
Grange	Bert	Manchester Airport plc
Green	Cedric	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Grey	Brian	Railfuture North West
Holmes	Chris	GMPTC
Jarvis	Chris	Inst of Transport Admin
Johnson	Brian	Virgin Cross Country
Johnson	Steve	TransPennine Express
Jones	Steve	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Jones	Kathy	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Kennington	Colin	Cheshire CC
Knowles	Denis	Liverpool John Lennon Airport
Koring	Dave	Crewe/Shrewsbury Passengers Association
Lambden	Mike	National Express
Leyland	Steve	Virgin West Coast
Longworth	Bob	Manchester Airport plc
Lunt	Tom	Public Transport User
Macfarlane	Andrew	Mid Cheshire Rail Users Association
McCully	Steve	Railfuture
McDermott	Ian	North Trafford Rail Group
Mooney	John	Passenger Focus
Moore	Filipina	Transport Resource Unit - GMCVO
Moorhouse	John	NWPTUF
Murray	John	Rochdale Travel Partnership

O'Friel	Brendan	NWPTUF
Owen	John	NWPTUF/TPC
Pennyfather	Keith	Macclesfield Public Transport Liaison Committee
Pettener	Alan	East Cheshire Line RUG
Price	G.	North Cheshire Rail Users Group
Richardson	M	Blackpool & Fylde RUA
Robinson	Peter	NWPTUF/TPC
Rollins	Richard	Lancaster & Skipton RUG
Sidebottom	David	Passenger Focus
Swallow	Ken	CILT (UK)
Tripp	Roger	GMPT
Tudor	Robin	Liverpool John Lennon Airport
Warhurst	Russell	University of Chester
White	Gilly	TransPennine Express
Wrigley	Mike	STORM

APOLOGIES

Antrobus	Emma	NW Rail Investment Campaign
Bell	Beverley	NW Traffic Area Office
Brooks	Simon	Network Rail
Clarke	David & Clarissa	CPRE & AFA
Coleman	Chris	Virgin Trains
Colley	Peter	Friends of Lake District
Davies	Sue	RNID
Green	Leonard	CPT North West
Lynch	Joe	Bus Users UK
McGurk	Kevin	Bus Users UK
Pearce	Steve	Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
Potts	C A	Copeland RUG
Reynolds	Christine	NWPTUF/TPC
Scoles	Alan	CPT Coach Commission
Trotman	Jim	Lancaster City Council
Walsh	Claire	NWRDA
Watson	Ian	NWPTUF/TPC