

*promoting quality public transport.....*

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## Minutes of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Forum held on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at County Hall, Preston.

Peter Robinson in the Chair

### 07/2/1F INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed delegates and members of the public. He explained that the purpose of TravelWatch is to represent 'joined up transport' in the region from the perspective of the passenger. The organisation has now been registered as a Community Interest Company. Peter expressed thanks for the work done by Brendan O'Friel, the previous chairman. He explained that funding for TravelWatch remains problematic and welcomed donations from any organisation. This forum would focus, in the main, on bus travel. National Express was thanked for sponsoring the meeting.

### 07/2/2F ATTENDEES AND APOLOGIES

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

### 07/2/3F MINUTES OF THE FORUM HELD ON 10<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007 IN CREWE

These were accepted as a true and correct record, subject to an amendment to Page 4, Item 2. The last sentence should read: *"It was suggested by another speaker that money set aside for additional rolling stock by GMPTE will now have to be used to pay bus operators as a result of the recent inspector's ruling regarding reimbursement for concessionary travel. This suggestion was later refuted by Tony Fawthrop."*

### 07/2/4F MATTERS ARISING None

### 07/2/5F COACH TRAVEL

1. **National Express in the North West.** Mike Lambden (Head of Corporate Affairs, National Express) gave a presentation about the role of his company in the provision of long-distance coach services across Britain. The salient points within the comprehensive presentation were:

- Many of the routes in the North West originate from as early as the 1920s. NEx absorbed long-standing operators such as Standerwick, North Western and Crosville.
- The 1980s saw big changes with deregulation and competition, much of which radically altered the network and operating practices.
- NEx is a well recognised and trusted name but there is a mistaken belief that it only serves the needs of students and the elderly. This is merely a reflection of demographic trends.
- To avoid the confusing sub-brands, such as Express Shuttle, Jetlink, etc, the brand was re-launched in 2003 with a single identity and logo. Recognition is now very high.
- Facts include: 1000 pick-up points, 1750 employees + 1250 contracted drivers, over 500 NEx branded coaches with an average age of three years.
- Services are provided to serve local needs, with necessary regional differences.
- In the North West, Manchester and Liverpool are major hubs, with Preston, Blackpool, Manchester Airport and Chester being important locations. Manchester and Liverpool coach stations have been funded by NEx and are of high quality, whereas the Blackpool base is unattractive.

- The frequency of services to London is: Manchester - 10 per day, Liverpool - 7, Preston - 5, Blackpool - 4, Chester - 3, Manchester Airport - 5. There are many other destinations across the country.
  - Coaches on major routes, e.g. Liverpool - Manchester - Leeds, are fully accessible and it is expected that all services will be so by 2012. There is however a problem with ensuring that all stops are similarly equipped as many are owned by local authorities.
  - The environmental advantage of the coach over the private car was stressed, as was the tight regulation of driving hours and skill.
  - Challenges include increasing congestion on the M62 (predicted to get much worse) and in cities (due to traffic lights and road works). The Highways Agency has yet to understand that a coach is a High Occupancy Vehicle. Despite this the challenge is to get more people out of their cars. This may require future changes to service styles and routes.
2. **Excursions and Private Hire.** Alan Scoles (Operations Planning Director, WA Shearings) and Leonard Green (CPT) explained the role of coach travel. The chief points made were:
- Such services (known as Occasional Services) have no fixed, guaranteed schedule. They go from anywhere to anywhere, at any time, carrying any number of people; normally as part of a leisure product. The driver plays an active part in providing customer service. The operation is wholly commercial.
  - The categories of Occasional Services are holidays, excursions and private hire.
  - Holidays can range from a 2-day break to a Grand European Tour, with a range of prices to suit. Most packages are financially protected. Joining arrangements include hub and spoke or line of route, neither of which is wholly efficient for the customer. Travel from all areas is at a standard price. The cost include all facilities, including accommodation, meals, entertainment, trips out, etc. Customers are mainly domestic (and over 50) but the tours are also popular with tourists from abroad.
  - Excursions are one-off day trips to special events or destinations. They are not always subject to package travel regulations. The itinerary is fixed by the operator.
  - Private hire, by any organisation, has more flexibility (subject to operating standards). It is now frequently used as a replacement for other forms of transport, e.g. rail replacement services.
  - Drivers must now have a wide knowledge of the route, dropping-off and parking, safety legislation, documentation, local regulations and customer care.
  - Recent and impending legislation impacts upon the provision of these services, e.g. DDA provisions, seat belt and no-smoking regulations, EU training directives. New drivers' hours regulations have created a loss of flexibility
  - Key industry issues relate to a) the lack of political support (as there is no public money to account for, nor is it an election issue), b) excursion coaches have a poor image, c) the sector is small so effective lobbying is difficult, d) congestion is becoming more of a problem, e) inappropriate legislation and regulation over drivers' hours, vehicle weights and the impending London Low Emission Zone, f) access (nimby attitude, image of the passengers, unpopular/unsightly vehicles and difficult to manage vehicle movements), g) dropping-off points (safety, facilities, location of attractions/hotels, use by blue badge holders, overall policing), h) parking provision (location, permanence, many areas parking areas have a better revenue earning potential, problems with safety and security), i) lack of advance planning for coaches at major event - e.g. Liverpool Capital of Culture 2008.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were noted:

- The bus and coach stations in Manchester are widely separated (Shudehill and Chorlton Street) whilst there seemed to be more 'joined-up' thinking with the new interchange at Leeds.
- Some NEx drivers have not been as helpful as they should. It was agreed that frequent spot-checks should be made.
- The opportunity for going to major events by coach is not widely advertised. Mike commented that there is often a mixed response from organisers who do not always provide suitable dropping-off points.
- Around 20% of services are registered as local services. These particularly serve rural areas.
- Extra coaches can be hire in if short term peaks are to be satisfied.
- The possible provision of coach services from Shropshire and North Wales to Liverpool Airport is being examined.

- The poor pay levels and public image of coach drivers was noted.
3. **The Users' View.** Phil Tonks (Bus Users UK) made a short presentation on the need for passenger issues to be kept under consideration.

#### 07/2/6F LOCAL TRANSPORT BILL AND CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL (See below for Glossary of Acronyms)

Paul Fawcett provided an update on the situation regarding the above matters. The main points of his presentation were:

- The Travel Concessions Bill 2007 a) extends the geographical scope of free off-peak bus travel for the elderly and disabled from April 2008, b) requires TCA's to determine the scheme and operators to participate, c) the TCA's are to reimburse operators for all trips made in the area regardless of the passengers' areas of residence, d) require smart cards and passes to bear a national logo.
- Bill is essentially permissive, giving the Secretary of State a wide range of powers to intervene to a) appoint an appeals body, b) extend the scheme to scholars ages 16-18, c) extend the scheme to other modes (possibly local and community rail services) and taxis (via voucher schemes), d) amend the timing of the concessions, e) allow mutual recognition of concessionary bus passes across the UK, f) introduce a centrally administered scheme.
- TWNW's comprehensive response can be viewed on the web site. The main points were: a) funding via RSG discriminates against "honeypot" and "retiree" TCAs and by failing to reflect bus service levels creates financial winners and losers, b) any adjustment to LOIS reimbursement formula should be transparent and apply across all TCAs, c) TCAs should be "top tier" authorities, c) support for extending time limit on appeals by operators to Secretary of State's appointed inspector, d) suggests extension to Express Coach Services and local LRT and community rail to address concerns over migration to bus, e) robust and dependable monitoring will be paramount and could be integrated with monitoring for performance regimes and BSOG, f) the plan constitutes a much needed improvement in concessionary bus travel in England compared to Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London.
- A reply from the DfT noted the following: a) there will be no change to the 09.30 - 23.00 'window', b) funding will be by a demographic formula but other options being considered, e.g. to compensate "honeypot" TCAs, c) reimbursement will be by Districts on the basis of LOIS, d) the Secretary of State is empowered to extend concessions to other modes and TCAs can still offer above statutory minimum, e) voluntary half fare on most Express Coaches.
- TWNW has responded to the 'White Paper' *Putting Passengers First*. The full reply is available on the TWNW web site. The reply from the DfT thanked TWNW for the generally supportive comments and stated that the Road Transport Bill would address the concerns expressed. The Secretary of State invited TWNW to attend the Transport Committee. (John Moorhouse and Paul Fawcett gave evidence to the committee, before Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody, on 13 June.)
- The draft Local Transport Bill (renamed from Road Transport Bill) implements much of the content of *Putting Passengers First* but adds a number of new provisions: a) new powers for SS and local transport authorities to set up, "redraw" (or wind up) PTAs consisting of whole local transport authorities' areas. b) PTA powers of intervention in Highway Authorities, c) LTPs and Bus Strategies replaced by Local Transport Policies and, in metropolitan areas, Integrated Transport Strategies and Implementation Plans, d) new duty on local transport authorities "to develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport to, from and within their areas", e) private hire vehicles to be enabled to operate as taxi buses and carry passengers at separate fares (the last item stems directly from a suggestion from TWNW).
- At a 'roadshow', organised by the Government Office for the NW, it was agreed that proposals contained in the Bill are somewhat 'urban-centric', with the justification that "most buses are in urban areas". It was agreed that a split between highway and transport authorities and poor bus lane enforcement are the main barriers to punctuality.

#### 07/2/7F REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Lillian Burns provided an update to the report provided at the last Forum in Crewe. She made the following points:

- Chris Dale and Paul Fawcett had represented TWNW over four days of the examination in public, arguing the case for more emphasis on public transport in the master plan for the region. Lillian had also attended (not necessarily representing TWNW).

- The panel of inspectors considered the draft strategy and concluded that it was deficient in a number of aspects. It would need to be altered according to the inspectors' recommendations. There should be a better balance between economic aspects, environmental considerations and social aspects. They believed the draft was too economically weighted. Considerations of the effects of climate change should be embedded throughout the document.
- The draft report on one hand stressed the need for public transport, demand management and modal shift but, on the other hand, endorsed a number of major road schemes without justification. It agreed that the restriction on the provision of parking spaces at airports would ultimately encourage the use of sustainable modes for journeys to the airports. The need for improvements to the Manchester rail hub and the development of light rapid transit in major urban centres was supported. The report lacked an endorsement of flexible, demand responsive transport in rural areas. It is somewhat neutral on the subjects of walking and cycling.
- A revised draft version of the Regional Spatial Strategy will be issued in the autumn. Subject to further modification, this final, statutory, document will determine the content of local development documents and transport plans. After that the process will start all over again.

## 07/2/8F NETWORK RAIL ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGIES

Chris Dale presented an overview of the recently published North West RUS document. The purpose of the RUS is to look at current and future use and identify performance/demand requirements or issues. It proposes interventions consistent with funding and the overall timescale. The following points were identified in relation to each route (matters relating to freight provision have been omitted):

- **Stockport/Buxton corridor** - Remodelling of Buxton station; lengthening of peak trains; improved layout of platforms 13/14 at Manchester Piccadilly to ease overcrowding.
- **Marple corridor** - Lengthen peak trains on the Bredbury line; rebuild Guide Bridge as a transport interchange; extra peak trains and longer units on the Hadfield line with increased speeds on the Glossop triangle.
- **Stalybridge corridor** - Longer peak trains to Stalybridge and Huddersfield with extra off-peak to Huddersfield; increase line speeds at Guide Bridge West Junction (actually east of Guide Bridge!) to/from Stalybridge.
- **Calder Valley corridor** - Extend Calder Valley trains to a rebuilt Salford Crescent station, allowing interchange with services to Manchester Airport (otherwise extend to Salford Central, new east-facing bay); lengthen Rochdale peak trains.
- **Bolton corridor** - Increase line speed between Manchester and Euxton Junction; relocate Salford Crescent to the junction of the Bolton/Atherton lines; longer peak trains on Westhoughton line with possible extra platforms at Lostock.
- **Atherton corridor** - Lengthen peak trains or improve headways to allow more trains to run.
- **Chat Moss corridor** - Fourth train per hour between Manchester and Liverpool plus longer or extra peak trains; increase line speeds between Huyton and Patricroft; additional platforms at Salford Central to allow Liverpool trains to call; develop interchanges at Eccles and Newton le Willows; improve headways at Rainhill.
- **Cheshire Lines corridor** - New station to interchange with Metrolink at Cornbrook or White City; lengthen peak trains between Manchester and Liverpool.
- **Northwich corridor** - No changes proposed.
- **Styal corridor** - Third platform at Manchester Airport (work now commenced).
- **St Helens corridor** - Lengthen peak hour Wigan trains.
- **Station closures** - Ardwick, Denton and Reddish South listed for closure in the consultation document but now excluded from final report. Long term viability is subject to local developments and trends.

Chris noted that the forthcoming Route Utilisation Strategies for Lancashire and Cumbria, West Coast, Merseyside, Yorkshire and Humber and Wales will all have an impact on the North West region. As with the North West RUS, TWNW will be involved in all the consultations.

## 07/2/9F OPEN FORUM

An opportunity was provided for members of the audience to put questions or make comments to the speakers:

- Progress on developing the Wrexham-Bidston Line was dependent on decisions by the Welsh Assembly. The aspiration is to build a station at Woodchurch and electrify throughout.
- Bus destination indicators should be present at the rear as well as at the front of buses.
- In contrast to the high level of training and safety compliance on buses and coaches, taxi drivers are not required to have more than just a clean driving licence. Comments have been made in the press about the poor standard of taxi driving and the age of some vehicles used.
- Concern was also expressed about the increased use of 'stretched limos', which are not subject to safety/quality testing regimes.
- There is believed to be compelling case for a train service through Reddish South and Denton stations. It was noted that neither station's future is secure without route development.
- Concern was expressed about bus service levels, particularly in rural areas.
- It is rumoured that Network Rail proposes to take two platforms at Blackpool North out of use.
- Rail congestion around Manchester is steadily increasing, without immediate plans to alleviate same.
- There is concern that the DfT will increasingly effect a direct control of local train services.

## 07/2/8F NEXT FORUM

To be held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October in Manchester.

## GLOSSARY OF TRANSPORT RELATED ACRONYMS (some of which are used in the text above)

BSOG	Bus Service Operator Grant (was Fuel Duty Rebate)
CC	"Shire" County Council
CT	Community Transport
DC	District Council
GONW	Government Office for the North West
HOC	House of Commons (Transport Committee)
ITIP	Integrated Transport Implementation Plan
ITS	Integrated Transport Strategy
ITSO	A national Smartcard Standard
LOIS	"Loss of income sustained" formula
LRT	Light Rapid Transit
LTA	Local transport authority
LTP	Local Transport Plans
MBC	Metropolitan Borough Council
NLG	National Liaison Group (of Travel Watches)
OFT	Office of Fair Trading
PHV	Private Hire Vehicle
PSV	Public Service Vehicle
PTA	Passenger Transport Authority
QC	Quality Contract
QP	Quality Partnership
RSG	Rate Support Grant
SofS	Secretary of State
SQP	Statutory Quality Partnership
SPCV	Small passenger carrying vehicle with eight or less passenger seats
TC	Traffic Commissioner
TCA	Travel Concession Authority
UA	Unitary Authority
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreements

PRESENT

Agate	Charles	
Barnett	C	Bus Users UK
Bell	Peter	NW Bus Commission
Bowes	Derek	Arriva NW and Wales
Briggs	Jeff	Halton BC
Briggs	Janet	North Cheshire RUG
Burns	Lillian	NW TAR (CPRE)
Burton	David	SELRAP
Butterworth	David	Travelwatch NW
Clarke	Clarissa	Access for All Ltd
Clarke	David	CPRE Transport Campaign Group
Consterdine	Fred	CASPA
Conway	Malcolm	Lakes Line Action Group
Crossley	Preva	Hindley Rail Users Group
Dale	Chris	BUUK
Davies	Martyn	Merseytravel
Dickie	Robert	KADBUS
Evans	David	BAFRUA
Fawcett	Paul	Travelwatch NW
Fawthrop	Tony	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Finnie	Simon	Arriva NW and Wales
Fitzpatrick	Michael	Stagecoach Merseyside
Garrett	Tony	Wirral Transport User Assoc
Garvey	Peter	Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Green	Leonard	Confederation of Passenger Transport UK
Grey	Brian	Railfuture
Harrop	Bill	CN4M Transport Pool
Jarvis	Chris	Institute of Transport Administration
Johnson	Brian	Virgin Trains
Jones	Steven	GMTAG
Knowles	Denis	Liverpool JL Airport
Koring	Dave	Crewe & Shrewsbury Passengers Association
Lambden	Mike	National Express
Lamkin	Peter	WBRU Assoc
Lunt	Tom	
McCulley	Steve	RailFuture NW
McDermott	Ian	HTRG
Miller	David	MCRUA
Murray	John	Rochdale Transport Partnership
Oakes	Bill	CILT
Oakes	Russell	CILT
Owen	John	Travelwatch NW
Partington	Geoff	Ramblers Association
Pennyfather	Keith	Travelwatch NW
Perkins	Mike	OPSTA
Pettener	Alan	ECLRUG
Richardson	Malcolm	BAFRUA
Robinson	Peter	Travelwatch NW
Scoles	Alan	CPT
Swallow	Ken	CILT (UK)
Tonks	Phil	Bus Users UK
Warhurst	Russell	University College, Chester
Warner	John	Kendal Bus Users
Wrigley	Michael	STORM

## APOLOGIES

Balmforth	John	TravelWatch Midlands West
Barker	Mark	Northern Rail
Buckley	John Peter	FOSCL
Byrne	Paul	Transport 2000 Merseyside
Coutts	C	CASPA
Cuff	Janet	Ramblers Association
Davies	Peter	Railfuture Yorkshire
Dawson	Peter	STORM
Dawson	Sue	TravelWatch Midlands West
Grange	Bert (Coun)	Cheshire CC
Guiven	Jo	Institute of Tourism and Transport
Irwin	Chris	TravelWatch SW
Kennington	Colin	Cheshire CC
Lappin	Jo	GONW
Leech	Marian	TravelWatch Midlands West
Leyland	Steve	Virgin West Coast
Lucas	Paul	GMPTE
Macfarlane	Andrew	Railfuture NW
Moore	Filipina	GMCVC
Moorhouse	John	TravelWatch NW
O’Friel	Brendan	TravelWatch NW
O’Brien	Kathryn	Northern Rail
Robinson	David	TravelWatch NW
Sidebottom	David	Passenger Focus
Thomas	John	World Ship Society
Watson	Ian	
Yates	David	FRECCLES
Yarwood	M	CASPA
Young	John	Stagecoach

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