

*promoting quality public transport.....*

## **CONFERENCE REPORT**

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010**  
**The Storey Creative Industries Centre, Lancaster**

***Conference kindly sponsored by First/Keolis TransPennine Limited***

### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

The Chairman, Chris Dale welcomed delegates to Lancaster and thanked First/Keolis TransPennine Limited for their kind support. He went on to inform delegates of the activities and work of TravelWatch North West since the last conference. This included:

A response to RS 2010 Part 1 – the High Level Strategic Framework Consultation in February (Regional Strategies had now been scrapped).

A discussion paper on rail seat reservations based on work done by TWNW Board member Richard Rollins, published in March. This paper aimed to highlight passengers experiences and shortcomings in reservation procedures and suggested possible improvements. It generated a wide ranging response including comments from Barry Doe.

Also in March a response to the Manchester City Centre Transport Strategy. TWNW raised concerns about the impact of the Manchester Hub, High Speed Rail and rail electrification on the strategy. There was also comment on the lack of city centre penetration by proposed cross city buses, the unpopular location of Shudehill bus station, passengers dislike of changing buses to access the city centre and the need to co-ordinate an expanding Metrolink with bus services.

The TWNW Board had met on 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

On 29<sup>th</sup> April TWNW responded to the DfT on their consultation paper on the future of rail franchising. TWNW shared the concerns of the Campaign for Better Transport about an apparent message in the document that rail operators would be able to cut services more easily in the future.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May a response was made to the DfT's consultation paper on Improving Bus Passenger Services through the Regulatory Framework.

TWNW has been involved in consultation events based around the initial work on the third generation of Local Transport Plans held by Warrington Borough Council and Cheshire East Council.

TWNW was represented at Stakeholder events held by Northern Rail, TransPennine Express and East Midlands Trains and at two meetings of West Coast Rail 250.

### ***Chairs Activities***

Chris was invited to and attended Louise Ellman's constituency dinner, where he met Lord Adonis and spoke with him about the work of TravelWatch.

Other events attended since the last conference included

- Two meetings of the Regional Transport Advisory Group and one of its' rail committee. This body is destined to disappear under the auspices of the new government, which will remove the local input into major transport planning schemes. This is along with the cancellation of the Regional Strategies.
- A reception held in Westminster by Passenger Focus to launch their new role with buses, coaches and light rail attended by Sadiq Khan MP (Minister of Transport).
- TravelWatch SouthWest's conference in March in Taunton, where rail rolling stock was a major topic of discussion. Many delegates wanted the class 142 Pacers to be removed from the area, so Chris stated that we would happily receive them back into the North West, as they are better than nothing.
- Two meetings of the Merseyside Integrated Transport Forum.
- A meeting of the TW national chairs in Birmingham where various ideas for increasing our profile were discussed. From this meeting Chris was nominated to attend a discussion group hosted by Passenger Focus into the effects of short notice registrations of bus service alterations. Amongst others attending were the Senior Traffic Commissioner, and representatives from CPT, Traveline, and Bus Users UK.
- A conference in London based around improving the lot of the rail passenger. This was an interesting event which proved useful in some areas, but when it came to smart ticketing projects, the focus was on how it helped bus passengers with very little mention of rail.
- A couple of meetings of the British Transport Police North West Citizens Forum.

### ***General issues***

- Train overcrowding – Passenger Focus did not take up TWNW 's offer to do some surveying work to demonstrate the nature of the overcrowding problem

in our region. As part of the general cuts in government expenditure there is a threat to the provision of additional rolling stock to help alleviate the problem. TOWNW issued a news release on this topic. Indeed it is likely that public transport generally will see cuts as a result of the governments saving plans.

- Bus observers - In order to keep in touch with day to day events in bus service operation, changes in service and other developments the TOWNW Board decided to endeavour to recruit volunteers from its user contacts as observers to keep a watching brief on such matters. TOWNW aims to cover each Local Transport Authority area in the region and have so far had a good response from contacts. A meeting is to be set up with all the prospective observers to determine working practices and reporting procedures. TOWNW is working closely with Passenger Focus on this project – the feedback received should be useful for them as the statutory bus passenger representatives.

## **2. The Changing Role of the Traffic Commissioner** ***Beverley Bell, Traffic Commissioner North Western Area***

Beverley Bell said that this was a vital meeting.

Her role was to regulate the bus and road haulage industry, making sure vehicles and licenses were safe. There were 15,000 lorry and 1500 bus and coach operators but half her time devoted to bus and coach.

Resources were a problem with just two bus monitors for the whole of the North West. Things would not improve because of forthcoming cuts to DfT budgets.

The Local Transport Act 2008 was welcomed – it gave more power to Traffic Commissioners (TCs), but not resources. There was an increased burden on the industry with Bus Operating Companies (BOCs) having to demonstrate punctuality (TC power to fine up to £550 per vehicle) for late running. Operators had their own external problems though e.g. road works.

Mrs Bell tried to influence other parties – Highways Agency, Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) – the 2008 Act gave the TC powers to call LTAs to account. The Act also gave LTAs the power to impose a Quality Contract on BOCs although Mrs Bell would prefer a Quality Partnership approach. She was interested on views on this.

She accepted that the TC profile was not high for the consumer and now Passenger Focus (PF) had come onto the scene.

She felt there should be one standard of punctuality for buses – no more than one minute early and 5 minutes late.

Given the lack of bus monitors Mrs Bell felt that TOWNW could be the eyes and ears for passengers and should report findings to BOCs, TC and PF. She welcomed TOWNW's mystery shopper proposals and wished to be kept informed of results.

Mrs Bell put letters of complaint from passenger at the top of her priority list. More than one complaint about a matter pointed to it being a significant issue.

Mrs Bell took a firm line on poor maintenance issues and always held road and passenger safety as being paramount.

### **3. The Role of Community Transport**

#### ***Keith Halstead, Chief Executive, Community Transport Association UK (CTA)***

Keith spoke of the synergy between TOWN and the CTA and opportunities to work together. The CTA represented the views of its members and worked with other organisations, including the DfT and House of Commons Transport Committee, ACORP and Passenger Focus.

CTA members related to many other voluntary groups. CTA worked closely with the Welsh and Scottish governments. CTA was working towards an integrated, community based transport network. There was a free advice line.

Training programmes for minibus drivers were carried out.

Community Transport organisations (CTOs) had different attributes, often voluntary/charities or Community Interest Companies.

Sections 19/22 of the 2008 Transport Act provided for community car schemes. Some CTOs run tendered services (e.g. schools) and some run registered bus services.

There were 1500 CTO's - 700 had claimed BSOG. CTA was making others aware of it if eligible and the number had been pushed up to 860. 54% of LTAs took advantage of LT Act provisions for Community Transport. There was no LTA support for capital funding. Many CTOs were grant funded.

The new government would look closely at funding – services could be cut. The Big Society was taking over from government, with more being put onto the voluntary sector - government should provide funding for that.

CTA felt there should be a renewed focus on rural areas, especially given demographic changes with rises in the elderly and disabled. If personal access to the car was lost what was the alternative? Small vehicles were better suited for many journeys.

### **4. Q&A (Mrs Bell and Mr Halstead)**

- In response to the Chair Mrs Bell said that the Notices & Proceedings (N&P) publication set out applications for licenses and registrations. She could not say whether timetables and fares information would be published now that these could be made electronically. Where services changed, Bus Companies (BOCs) had to give 56 days notice – this could be reduced by the TC though

she did not like short notice changes. The LTA could also issue a contract with less than 56 days notice.

- Delegates gave examples of lack of information about service changes and cancellations. A suggestion was made to provide notices at bus stops warning of changes. Another suggestion was for BOCs to have fixed period timetables like rail. Phil Smith from Stagecoach said that fixed duration timetables were possible in rural areas but more difficult in urban areas due to competitive services. The Local Transport Act moved towards fixed change times. BOCs had to provide LTAs with all information about changes – LTAs could act on that. There was also a problem of notices about changes being removed especially in urban areas.
- Mrs Bell suggested that regular formal meetings between herself and BOCs, LTAs CT and TWNW would be useful.
- Roger Bell sought CTA advice on services to Martin Mere.
- Tony Potts questioned CT abstracting from regular services (Keith Halstead said this was not allowed) and the need for a rail alternative to the bus concessionary pass where bus services were sparser than rail (Keith Halstead said that the Equalities Act should determine whether the concessionary scheme was fair).
- Ian Watson said that he would be writing to the TC regarding suitability of bus vehicles (Mrs Bell said that the TC could influence this).
- In response to the question are TCs effective, Mrs Bell said that much was achieved by consensus.

## **5. British Transport Police – Working with the Community** ***Superintendent Peter Mason, BTP, North Western Area***

Peter emphasised the restricted resources available to the BTP – a total of 265 police officers in the North West. Liverpool, Manchester and Carlisle had 24/7 coverage. There were good relationships with the Home Office forces especially in rural areas. Crime was relatively low compared with other forces. DfT savings would mean a reduction of 2.7 million pounds in the BTP's budget.

Safer Stations and Journeys were being promoted through expansion of the neighbourhood policing concept. Police and Community meetings merged with Home office forces in rural areas.

There was determination to stop drunks on trains (e.g. Blackpool – Preston) by not allowing them to board.

The team establishment had changed to give 16 teams across the area with teams focussed to cover peak demand. Passenger confidence at stations was increasing. Volunteer groups at stations were linked with BTP.

There was a commitment to complete at least 25 problem solving plans.

Citizen forums were being developed with a forthcoming meeting in Preston on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. Rail User Groups were linking with neighbourhood policing. Volunteers were being developed and 20 special constables recruited. BTP worked closely with Passenger Focus.

Focussing on the Citizen meant increasing customer satisfaction and public confidence. The latter was benchmarked now at 88%.

Partnership with the TOCs was important, with various schemes aimed at e.g. schools and teenagers getting drunk at the beach (making trains on the Southport – Liverpool line dry).

### Q & A

- Colin Kennington remarked that drunks turned off late night trains could then get on a bus. Peter said any action was taken in partnership with the local police. Responding to Tony Potts he said that BTP would not let drunks on to a train if the conductor or driver were not happy. They should wait for the police to arrive in such circumstances. Peter Robinson said there were drunks at different times of the day and he posed the possibility of banning alcohol on all trains. David Evans mentioned drunks on rail replacement buses when no rail staff were present.
- Gabriel Drew asked about the BTP role with fares evasion. Peter said BTP supported TOCs, who led in such matters.
- The BTP did not police Metrolink but would like to.
- Peter acknowledged Malcolm Richardson's point about Blackpool FC now being in the Premier League, commenting that the number of visiting fans would be limited to the size of the ground.
- Emma Mills was concerned about fare dodging and acts of violence. Peter said that a lot of time was spent on policing football, overall only about 4/5% on revenue checks.

## 6. Open Forum

Owing to lack of time general questions from the floor were not taken. Those written questions that had been sent would be forwarded as appropriate.

## 7. Next Conference

The next conference is scheduled to be held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at Hatton Garden, Liverpool kindly sponsored by Merseytravel. **However this date may change to Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October – definitive advice will be given as soon as possible**, The AGM would take place at 10.00 followed by the conference at 11.00. It was hoped that Mrs Louise Ellman MP, now confirmed as Chair of the House of Commons Transport Committee would address the conference. It was also planned, courtesy of Merseytravel, to arrange visits to the Mersey Tunnel and Ferries in the afternoon.

## Appendix - Attendance

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
<i>Adrian Dunning</i>	<i>NW Transport Roundtable</i>
<i>Alan Pettener</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Beverley Bell</i>	<i>NW Traffic Commissioner</i>
<i>Bill Harrop</i>	<i>Transport Action Group</i>
<i>Bill Oakes</i>	
<i>Charles Agate</i>	
<i>Chris Dale</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Chris Jarvis</i>	<i>Institute of Transport Administration</i>
<i>Chris Laycock</i>	<i>SE Lancs Rail Action Partnership</i>
<i>Colin Barnett</i>	<i>Bus Users UK</i>
<i>Colin Kennington</i>	<i>Cheshire Integrated Transport</i>
<i>David Burton</i>	<i>SELRAP</i>
<i>David Evans</i>	<i>Blackpool &amp; Fylde RUA</i>
<i>Donna Atkinson</i>	<i>Ribble Valley Community Transport</i>
<i>Emma Mills</i>	<i>Transport Action Group Manchester</i>
<i>Gabriel Drew</i>	<i>East Cheshire RUG</i>
<i>Geoff Kerr</i>	
<i>Ian McDermott</i>	<i>North Trafford Rail Group</i>
<i>Ian Watson</i>	
<i>Jeff Briggs</i>	<i>Halton Borough Council</i>
<i>Jeremy Walker</i>	<i>Blackpool Council</i>
<i>Jim Trotman</i>	<i>Furness &amp; Lakes Line CRP</i>
<i>Jo Guiver</i>	<i>University of Central Lancashire</i>
<i>John Aaron</i>	
<i>John Berry</i>	<i>Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Assoc.</i>
<i>John Hart</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>John Hobbs</i>	<i>North Cheshire RUG</i>
<i>John Moorhouse</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>John Warner</i>	
<i>Joseph Hannett</i>	<i>Preston Community Transport Ltd</i>
<i>Keith Halstead</i>	<i>Community Transport Association UK</i>
<i>Keith Pennyfather</i>	<i>Macclesfield PTLC</i>
<i>Ken Swallow</i>	<i>CILT NW</i>
<i>Leonard Green</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Les Burton</i>	<i>Stagecoach Merseyside</i>
<i>Lillian Burns</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Malcolm Richardson</i>	<i>Blackpool &amp; Fylde RUA</i>

<i>Martyn Davies</i>	<i>Merseytravel</i>
<i>Michael Wrigley</i>	<i>STORM</i>
<i>Nick Entwistle</i>	<i>Fylde Tramway Society</i>
<i>Paul Byrne</i>	
<i>Paul Fawcett</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Peter Colley</i>	<i>Kendal &amp; District Bus User Group</i>
<i>Peter Garvey</i>	<i>GM Transport Campaign</i>
<i>Peter Lamkin</i>	<i>Wrexham Birkenhead RUA</i>
<i>Peter Mason</i>	<i>Operations Supt BTP NW</i>
<i>Peter Robinson</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Philip Harrison</i>	
<i>Phil Smith</i>	<i>Stagecoach NW</i>
<i>Richard Rollins</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Robert Talbot</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>
<i>Roger Bell</i>	<i>Ormskirk Preston Southport TA</i>
<i>Russell Oakes</i>	<i>CILT NW</i>
<i>Russell Warhurst</i>	<i>University of Chester</i>
<i>Sandra Dutson</i>	<i>RoadPeace NW</i>
<i>Tom Lunt</i>	
<i>Tony Potts</i>	<i>Copeland RUG</i>
<i>Tony Young</i>	<i>TravelWatch NorthWest</i>