

CONFERENCE REPORT

Thursday 2nd October 2008
MANCHESTER

Conference kindly sponsored by Trans Pennine Express

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Peter Robinson welcomed delegates to Manchester and thanked the sponsors, First Trans Pennine Express.

He explained that, following the Conference, the Annual General Meeting of TravelWatch North West would be held and would only be open to members of the company although observers would be welcome. He also indicated that a new Board would be confirmed at the AGM following the nominations received and the Community Interest Company rules.

2. Land Value Capture, Dave Wetzel, Financing and Economic Land Policy Consultant

Dave introduced this subject with his argument that the value of land is not taken into account when new developments are planned and implemented. Landowners are not taxed on the land value irrespective of the wealth generated from developments on it and consequently, are able to apply rental and leasing policies free from making any contribution from the profits achieved by the appreciation in the value of the land upon which developments are built.

Land Value taxing could help pay for transport facilities as it is a known fact that the value increases the closer that transport is developed. Good economy is linked to good transport links but this needs good land use planning. Canary Wharf is a good example as now 60,000 people a day use the new roads, Jubilee Line and Docklands Light Railway.

Large profits are made from small land investments and if these were to be taxed there would be potential for hypothecation towards projects such as Cross-Rail, currently planned to be funded by the fare box and taxpayers to the tune of £16 billion. Landowners will make no contribution despite their large profits on the land to be used and developed.

This anomaly leads to land being bought by speculators and left to deteriorate and become derelict whilst appreciating in value as regeneration policies and plans emerge.

In many countries a land value tax exists to exploit this source of project funding resulting in good and improved transport systems and Dave advocates such a tax in the UK to relieve pressure on government and taxpayers to fund new projects.

Question and discussion period addressed the following issues:

Merseytravel has achieved a degree of funding from the Liverpool One project but Government needs to be persuaded to adopt the principle of Land Value Capture. It should be in the interest of landowners to invest in transport as the access will increase the value of the land. In the USA landowners are consulted on LVC in development projects and are required to pay a "location benefit levy."

3. The Work of Passenger Focus - Anthony Smith, Chief Executive

Anthony has been with Passenger Focus and its predecessor, the Rail Passenger Council for almost 10 years.

He began by describing the National Passenger Survey (NPS) which is the largest regular transport survey in Europe. It currently indicates that 80% of train passengers are satisfied with their journey experience. 52% of satisfaction relates to punctuality and consequently influences the performance improvements targets. 19% of dissatisfaction relates to delays and how they are dealt with. The majority of dissatisfaction is recorded by commuters weighted by those in the South East. Leisure travellers record the most positive satisfaction returns.

He went on to describe passengers priorities, the top 5 of which are:

- Ø Prices/value for money
- Ø Availability of Seats
- Ø Sufficiency of services
- Ø Punctuality
- Ø Good Connections

Research findings had revealed an imbalance between the high satisfaction of passengers and the perceived value for money of rail travel which government and the rail industry needs to address.

Anthony then went on to list the research projects of Passenger Focus:

- Assisted Passenger Reservation Service (APRS) mystery shop
- Ticket vending machines
- Thameslink passenger needs
- Employer's requirements
- Route utilisation strategy (RUS)
- Intercity express programme (IEP) rolling stock research
- Station travel plans
- National station investment programme
- Fares and ticketing research
- Fares and ticketing the European comparison

He then introduced the Passenger Focus response to it being awarded the bus travel representation under the recent Transport Act. He indicated that PF had not actively sought this but was happy to accept it given appropriate resource. No comparative research had been undertaken in the style of NPS and therefore there was a need to benchmark. This will be undertaken by carrying out benchmarking comparative projects in 6 regions, reflecting a variety of economies and social mix. Research would also be made with passengers into the effect of Concessionary fares scheme.

Given the likely available resources PF will be unable to set up regional offices and so will be seeking partnerships in regions to enable it to obtain robust information and data. PF will link with transport groups and sees the TravelWatch movement as a key partner. Anthony commended the recent Bus Travel Survey published by TWNW. He expected to commence the operation in 2009.

Question and discussion period addressed the following issues:

Overcrowding is still a major issue on many train services. The provision of new coaches for some franchises is welcome but may still not be enough. PF is pushing government to provide for growth with longer franchises and is now involved with DfT in the specification of new franchises.

Relationship with Bus Users UK will be important to foster and PF is hoping to build a strong relationship.

Ticket machines at main stations often fail to offer the full range of available tickets, often only offering full price at off peak times. This requires review as even NRS often quotes the most expensive ticket. There is much work to do on this matter.

PF will hope to carry out some work on coach passengers but currently they report high levels of satisfaction from this sector.

PF funding is still being negotiated with DfT and will be challenging. However regional presence is vital.

4. The Future of the Rail Industry - Chris Green, Past Chairman, Railway Forum

The path to the present level of stability of the rail industry has taken 12 years. The years between 1996 and 2002 were, however, wasted. The following years witnessed good regimes of improved performance and investment. The safety situation is much better with SPADs reduced by 90% and broken rails incidents reduced by 80%. Punctuality has been restored with only 2 train operating companies (on WCML and ECML) returning less than 90%. Funding is now stable with a 5 year plan of £29 billion projected spend from 2009 - 2014. £22 billion is earmarked for renewal and maintenance and about £8 billion for enhancements. This includes speed improvements for TPEX routes. However the proposed successor 30 year strategy needs much influence by stakeholders as its content is currently very weak.

The new West Coast timetable launches on 14th December with 40% more trains offering an increase of 70% in seats and a 7 day railway.

The average age of the UK train fleet is the youngest in Europe at 16 years and the future promises 1300 new coaches to be built and 150 DMUs for the Northern franchise.

Challenges to TravelWatch are to:

- Ø Influence 5 year plans - Electrification, capacity, new lines, campaign for NW improvements.
- Ø Seek regional leadership - Prioritise northern issues and form allegiance with NE to create stronger northern lobby. Support Northern way and Manchester Hub Strategy.
- Ø Fight for Capacity - Manchester "throat" upgrade; upgrade trains fleet; more car parks; longer trains.
- Ø Electrification - Fill in obvious gaps (Manchester - Liverpool & Preston); high speed lines by 2020.
- Ø Value for Money - Challenge for TOC's; better performance; solutions to overcrowding; 7 day railway; better rolling stock.

Question and discussion period addressed the following issues:

Restructuring the industry is not a practical option as it will only act to delay plans and strategies.

Investment in high speed trains service may suck funding out of regional rail investment. More money will be required if HST's are to be built but NW rail priorities in current strategies are robust. HS service will mean better deployment of trains.

There is little scope for double deck trains in the foreseeable future but 4-tracking the cross Manchester Piccadilly, Oxford Road to Deansgate artery should be No.1 priority.

The 7 day railway requires consistent timetabling but in the early part of the operation there is provision for some caution.

The high speed line proposal is to service Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. There could be scope to extend to other destinations but at conventional speed. However through services will need to be fought for.

The route of the HSL is yet to be determined but may follow some present line routes.

A powerful Northern body is required to lead lobbying for investment to mirror what is happening in London and Scotland.

Any lost routes where alignments are still available should be preserved for possible new line openings.

The HSL is required to meet demands of population growth and centres of diversity. The proposal may be unpopular with environmental groups but collective and realistic thinking is required to meet demand.

5. Concessionary Fares update - Chris Dale, TravelWatch North West

Chris reported on work in progress in researching the anomalies of the concessionary fares scheme. Confusion currently reigns with significant differences of transport availability offered under the scheme in different regions. For example Lancashire pass holders can use Blackpool Trams but others cannot. In Merseyside and Greater Manchester holders can use all forms of transport but visitors are restricted to buses. Holders of English passes are unable to use them in Wales and Scotland and vice versa, except for some cross border services. In parts of Cheshire some local councils will also contribute to the purchase cost of Seniors rail passes.

Question and discussion period addressed the following issues:

The base offer is for free bus travel and it is up to local authorities if they wish to add value to this by offering other forms of transport. However this needs to be accompanied by good information particularly in areas that receive a high number of visitors from other regions such as tourist destinations.

Passengers using demand responsive Community Transport schemes benefit in some areas but not in others.

6. Open Forum

A number of issues notified for the Open Forum had been effectively covered in the foregoing items and discussion. Others that were not were as follows:

Passengers are deterred from using TPE trains on the Scottish services that have replaced Voyagers as no "Quiet" space is offered. TPE feel that it is impractical to provide this facility in a 3 coach train but will consider if and when extra coaches are acquired.

The proposal for the relocation of Crewe station offers questionable value of money to taxpayers and passengers not using HS services whose journey times are likely to be longer. The advantages are minimal and also offer nothing to the residents of Crewe and surroundings.

Bus service information in Carlisle is poor with great confusion in and around the bus station and the distribution of route start and end points at different points in the City. Stagecoach and Cumbria County Council currently appear deny any problem for differing reasons. The issue needs addressing and is a deterrent to passengers. The contrast with the information provision over the Border in Scotland is quite marked.

Funding for TravelWatch North West is challenging. Previous attempts have been made to create a parallel organisation in Yorkshire and the North East but the feeling has always been that they are sufficiently served by current organisations and groupings.

The National Fares Manual has been discontinued but will shortly be available on a CD.

Ronald Schwartz asked that a representative of Metrolink make a presentation at a future Conference. This would be considered.

7. Next Conference

The next TravelWatch Conference will take place in Preston on Thursday 5th February 2009 and will feature a presentation from the Under Secretary of State for Transport.

8. TravelWatch North West AGM

Delegates were reminded that the first Annual General Meeting of TravelWatch North West would follow the Conference. A number of new Directors had been nominated to replace those retiring or deceased. As the number of nominations had not exceeded the number of Directors permitted no election was necessary.

Peter Robinson had indicated earlier that this would be the final TravelWatch North West Conference that he would chair as he would be standing down from the Chair of TWNW at the next Board meeting in late October. A vote of thanks was recorded to Peter noting great appreciation of his guidance through the early years of the TravelWatch movement during which it was felt that a secure foundation had been laid for the organisation.

Attendance

Name	Organisation
<i>Andrew Macfarlane</i>	<i>GM Transport Campaign</i>
<i>Alan Pettener</i>	<i>East Cheshire Line RUG</i>
<i>Anthony Smith</i>	<i>Passenger Focus</i>
<i>Brian Grey</i>	<i>Railfuture NW</i>
<i>Bill Harrop</i>	<i>Transport Pool</i>
<i>Charles Agate</i>	
<i>Chris Dale</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Chris Anslow</i>	<i>Lancs CC</i>
<i>Chris Green</i>	
<i>Chris Holmes</i>	<i>GMPTE</i>
<i>Chris Laycock</i>	<i>SELRAP</i>
<i>David Butterworth</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Dave Koring</i>	<i>CaSPA</i>
<i>Darren Axe</i>	
<i>Dave Wetzel</i>	
<i>David Burton</i>	<i>SELRAP</i>
<i>David Mallender</i>	<i>First TPE</i>
<i>David Robinson</i>	<i>CTC</i>
<i>David Simper</i>	<i>Blackpool BC</i>
<i>Denis Knowles</i>	<i>Liverpool Airport</i>
<i>Emma Gilpin</i>	<i>Halton BC</i>
<i>Emma Pemberton-Eccles</i>	<i>Network Rail</i>
<i>Fred Consterdine</i>	<i>CASPA</i>
<i>Frank Kennedy</i>	<i>Friends of The Earth</i>
<i>Gary Willott</i>	<i>Passenger Focus</i>
<i>Geoff Partington</i>	
<i>Greg Goodwin</i>	<i>FTPE</i>
<i>Ian Watson</i>	
<i>John Moorhouse</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>John Owen</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>John Warner</i>	
<i>Janet Briggs</i>	<i>NCRUG</i>
<i>Janet Cuff</i>	<i>Ramblers Assoc</i>
<i>Joe Lynch</i>	<i>TWSW</i>
<i>John Aaron</i>	
<i>John Hart</i>	
<i>John Hobbs</i>	<i>NCRUG</i>
<i>John Murray</i>	<i>Rochdale Transport Partnership</i>
<i>John Ryan</i>	<i>Wirral TUA</i>
<i>John Young</i>	<i>Stagecoach</i>
<i>Julia Mapp</i>	<i>Cross Country</i>
<i>Keith Pennyfather</i>	<i>Macclesfield PTLC</i>
<i>Ken McKelvie</i>	<i>Ramblers Assoc</i>
<i>Ken Swallow</i>	<i>CILT</i>
<i>Leonard Green</i>	
<i>Lillian Burns</i>	<i>NW TAR</i>
<i>Louise Ebbs</i>	<i>First TPE</i>
<i>Malcolm Richardson</i>	<i>BAFRUA</i>
<i>Malcolm Wright</i>	<i>WBRUA</i>
<i>Marian Leech</i>	<i>TWMW</i>
<i>Mary Diedo-Rayner</i>	
<i>Mark Barker</i>	<i>Northern Rail</i>
<i>Melanie Jeffs</i>	<i>GMCVO</i>
<i>Mel Gray</i>	<i>Raw Deal for Passengers</i>
<i>Michael Dunstan</i>	<i>Bluebird Bus & Coach</i>
<i>Mike Lambden</i>	<i>National Express</i>

<i>Mike Machin</i>	<i>Lancs & Morecambe RUG</i>
<i>Mike Wrigley</i>	<i>STORM</i>
<i>Paul Fawcett</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Peter Robinson</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Peter Davison</i>	
<i>Peter Foster</i>	<i>Sustrans</i>
<i>Peter Garvey</i>	<i>GM Transport Campaign</i>
<i>Peter Lamkin</i>	<i>WBRUA</i>
<i>Phil Edwards</i>	<i>NCRUG</i>
<i>Philip Harrison</i>	
<i>Phillipa Sudlow</i>	<i>CPT</i>
<i>Richard Rollins</i>	<i>LASRUG</i>
<i>Robert Talbot</i>	<i>LLRUG</i>
<i>Roger Jones</i>	<i>North West Rail Campaign</i>
<i>Ronald Schwarz</i>	
<i>Steve Burd</i>	<i>Blackpool Transport</i>
<i>Steve Clapham</i>	<i>Friends of Eccles Stn</i>
<i>Sue Dawson</i>	<i>TWMW</i>
<i>Tony Williams</i>	<i>Light Rail Transit Assoc</i>
<i>Tony Fawthrop</i>	<i>GM Transport Campaign</i>