

CONFERENCE REPORT

Thursday 8th October 2009

The Mechanics Centre, Manchester

Conference kindly sponsored by Greater Manchester Integrated Transport Authority

1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman, Chris Dale welcomed delegates to Manchester and thanked the sponsors and GMITA, for its kind support. He went on to inform delegates of the activities and work of TravelWatch North West since the last conference. A large number of consultations had been responded to. These included:

- Ø Network RUS Electrification Strategy (Network Rail)
- Ø Changes to administration of Concessionary Travel (DfT)
- Ø Taxi and PHV licensing- best practice (DfT)
- Ø Greater Manchester Transport Governance (GMITA)
- Ø Investment in Rail (HOCTC)
- Ø Passenger Focus Remit (DfT)
- Ø Quality Contracts (DfT)

He referred to the TWNW report published in June on the subject "Information on Bus Fares" which demonstrated the difficulties in obtaining information.

He also reported on the joint conference organised by TWNW and Passenger Focus held on 10th September at Carnforth on the subject of Rural Transport.

Finally he informed delegates of the recent office move of TWNW to Churchgate House in Oxford Street, Manchester, still under the auspices of the North West Development Agency.

2. The Greater Manchester Transport Scene *Councillor Keith Whitmore, Chair, GMITA.*

Keith informed delegates that he had attended all 3 party conferences in recent weeks as it was a very important time for Greater Manchester. The £1.5 billion will bring great benefits to the region and represents the budget of the new "Plan A."

He went on to describe the work in progress and its current status.

- Ø Metrolink Altrincham line being upgraded
- Ø City Centre track replacement due for completion on 2nd November
- Ø New fleet of Trams arriving and first batch in operation in New Year
- Ø Oldham – Rochdale heavy rail line now closed for conversion to Metrolink
- Ø CCTV operational at 20 stations by end of March 2010
- Ø Investment in bus corridors

He went on to stress the importance of the relationship with bus operators which had historically been strained but was now much better. Also the Authority was looking to expand the availability of Park & Ride sites incorporating cycle storage and indicated that there is an aspiration to achieve full access for all passengers at all stations in Greater Manchester.

He welcomed the government announcement of the proposed electrification of the Liverpool – Manchester Victoria corridor but deplored the reduction in train rolling stock allocation to the North West.

In liaison with other parts of the North the Authority is lobbying hard for the Manchester Hub proposal and believes that it will unlock the whole rail network for the North.

Work is also progressing with ACORP and a conference is being hosted on 5th November on Station Adoption. He also welcomed the Manchester stations report produced by TWNW in the summer and was confident funding will be achieved in due course to improve stations with Victoria, Oxford Road, Piccadilly and Salford Central as priorities.

A questions and discussion period addressed the following issues:

A new link between Piccadilly and Victoria would bring serious engineering challenges and is not part of the current plan. However if the HST2 requires a new station it may be considered as part of that.

The decision to convert the Oldham loop to Metrolink from heavy rail was taken as the former can penetrate town centres with greater ease and provide a better quality of public transport to more residents and offer more stations and access.

The decision by DfT to remove the displaced 5 train units previously used on the Oldham loop is a disgrace and meetings have been held at ministerial level and arguments are ongoing.

Poor information provision during the Metrolink suspension was acknowledged but is improving. GMITA welcomes any feedback from passengers.

As part of the Manchester Hub proposal the Castlefield Curve is receiving due consideration as it may give better access to through lines and integrate well with Northern Way recommendations.

Cheadle Hulme station improvements are due to start in the Autumn of this year and should be in progress well before Christmas.

3. Quality Partnerships and Contracts

Nick Vaughan, Transport Services Dept, GMPTE

Nick began by describing the Objectives of the scheme which are:

- Ø Improvements to Operations
- Ø Improvements to Services
- Ø A robust Integrated Network

Relationships with operators were now much better and there is now a stable bus network throughout Greater Manchester. A growth in quality bus corridors has been achieved although this has inevitably been at the expense of some services. A number of factors were taken into account in planning the network:

Improved Services

- Ø Capacity to cope with demand from economic growth
- Ø Good access for non car owners
- Ø Bus reliant corridors – fast frequent services
- Ø Greater feeder services to Metrolink/ rail heads.
- Ø 60 service change packages
- Ø Identification of gaps and solutions to plug them

Targets for Bus Network Standards

- Ø Minimum frequencies
- Ø Optimising first/ last bus availability
- Ø Maximise availability of principle service to 5 minutes walk of residences

Working with Operators

- Ø Partnership Steering Group with user representation
- Ø Ticketing & Fares
- Ø Design and information
- Ø Delivery – balance between commercial & supported services
- Ø Collaboration between operators

Improving Standards

- Ø Operators required to agree a Code of Conduct
- Ø Vehicle operating standards
- Ø Driver behaviour, staff appearance, information
- Ø Performance targets – published statistics
- Ø Punctuality, frequencies
- Ø Fare bands, Smart Cards

Improved Operations & Integration

- Ø Consulting on cross city services to key destinations
- Ø “Hot Spot” treatments in liaison with Districts to address congestion
- Ø Better feeder services
- Ø New bus stations at Rochdale, Bolton and Altrincham to improve integration
- Ø Integrated ticketing with maximum fares cap

If the Partnership fails GMPTE will look at the Quality Partnership Scheme and decide where the standards can be imposed on operators, but this will be a last resort.

A questions and discussion period addressed the following issues:

Alternative fuel options have been considered but this can only be a short term solution until a global strategy to deal with oil supply diminishing has been established. Mass movement will have to be addressed and legislation will be required.

Anomalies in the operation of multi modal ticket sales at Eccles travel shop were noted and it is hoped that a more integrated system will be in place in the not too distant future as it is logical for such a sales point.

It would be desirable to aspire to Oyster card technology but the complexity of Greater Manchester’s system and greater number of operators than London will be barriers to overcome. It may require an imposition on operators to achieve it.

4. Community Rail Partnerships

Neil Buxton, Assoc. of Community Rail Partnerships (ACORP)

Neil reported that there are currently 60 Community Rail Partnerships (CRP’s) in the UK. The Dept for Transport is the major funder but they do rely on other local contributors. Key partners are local authorities and train operators together with other local agencies, both public and private sector. CRP’s support DfT objectives by serving both leisure and commuter needs and offers alternatives to car use consequently contributing to reduced road congestion.

A CRP promotes better use of the line and standards at stations and seeks to achieve better value for local and regional rail operations. A variety of areas are covered from completely rural lines to urban commuter lines.

Promotion takes place by descriptive brochure and leafleting and special events and promotions such as Real Ale Trails and Music trains. Community newsletters are produced to keep residents and users and potential users informed of developments and also to provide communication lines between communities and rail operators. All CRP’s lines are around 3% above national rail growth figures.

They have also exploited opportunities for communities by procuring amenity opportunities at local stations in the heart of villages (cafe’s etc) and bringing visitors to them, thus helping their economy. CRP’s benefit from local decision making and policies are integrated with local plans and their outputs. The

partnerships are relatively cheap to organise and volunteers account for a value of £27 million in added value.

Publicity is achieved by awards, conferences designed to broaden the scope of promotions, information boards at stations, and other simple solutions such as improved signage.

Stations are often identified as the gateway to the community so an energetic programme of station adoption is promoted providing a conduit between communities and operators as well as achieving solutions and unlocking funding for developments such as the Harrington Hump to compensate for low platforms.

The overall aim is to increase income to the lines, and reduce subsidies for rural lines.

A questions and discussion period addressed the following issues:

It is a recognised potential problem that the continued use of 142/144 units may threaten services in the long term unless a replacement programme is put in place as the availability of spares for the ageing trains is likely to become a major issue.

There is a need to work with operators to ensure that the best possible service slots are available to CRP lines but equally business cases must be respected.

Due to the patchwork coverage of Tourism Authorities in England and a general lack of appreciation by them of the value of train services as opposed to cars in their strategies, liaison and creating partnerships with them remains to be very difficult in most cases.

5. Developments with Metrolink
Philip Purdy, Metrolink Director, GMPTE

Philip described the Metrolink system – 37 km of route line, 36 stops, and 20 million passengers annually. The operator was changed to Stagecoach in 2007 in a 10 year agreement. The operator has no revenue risk as this lies with GMPTE. Improvements currently being carried out include:

- Ø Track upgrades on the Altrincham and Bury lines took place in 2007
- Ø New visual identity on trams being rolled out this autumn
- Ø Stops in process of being upgraded
- Ø New overhead supply system installed
- Ø CCTV on all vehicles
- Ø Safety accreditation of stops being sought
- Ø Trialing new Park & Ride at Sale with leading Car Park operator
- Ø 8 new trams coming on to system next year (3 currently on trial)
- Ø Extension and modernisation of depot
- Ø DDA requirements to be met at all stops
- Ø Opening city centre lines on 2nd November next
- Ø TDM replacements

- Ø Wider platforms at Piccadilly Gardens and St. Peters Square
- Ø Refurbishment programme for present tram fleet

In addition a new operating system is to be used utilising a “line of sight” operation rather than signalling. It is believed that this will cater better for crowding, particularly at sports and concert events and will allow more vehicles to enter the system at busy times.

Expansion scheme 3a

This will bring a 31 km extension to the present network to Oldham and Rochdale, to Droylsden and to Chorlton in the next 3 years. The contract has been let and work is in progress. This will include a new depot on the other side of the city, 6 park & ride sites, 40 new vehicles (doubling the size of the present fleet) and also a spur to Media City.

Expansion scheme 3b

A funding package is in the process of being brought in to place by AGMA to continue the south Manchester line to Didsbury and the east Manchester line to Ashton under Lyne. Also included is the airport line a 2nd city centre crossing and town centre running in Rochdale and Oldham.

A questions and discussion period addressed the following issues:

In future all trams will have fewer seats than the present fleet affording greater capacity and also meeting global design templates together with the regulatory regime.

Communication of short notice works remains a problem, notably with the recent city centre work, and this will be examined in search of a remedy.

Consideration will be given to the allowance of bicycles to be carried on trams but will be the subject of severe health and safety requirements. Evidence is being gathered and appropriate policy recommendations will be put forward to the ITA on the basis of this taking into account the needs of other passengers.

Consultation will take place on the 2nd city crossing next year although the only option considered practical is now Deansgate.

The routes of the Chorlton link will be based on the best business case but it is likely to be from the Oldham Rochdale line. Modelling is taking place to determine the best passenger flows coupled with convenience. This will require some inter changing.

Timetabling services will likely be necessary on Oldham Rochdale lines in the future.

Checks will be carried out on the severity of tram door closing which have caused harm to passengers at peak times. The introduction of new trams will hopefully allow some double units to alleviate this.

6. Open Forum

Issues raised included

- Ø The cost of High Speed Rail and other priorities for rail investment
- Ø Publicity for sea links with the Isle of Man.
- Ø The potential for interchange at Eccles
- Ø Ticket checks at Manchester Piccadilly
- Ø A conference in support of SELRAP on November 6th
- Ø Bus replacement services for the Oldham loop closure (not calling at Rochdale station in the evening)
- Ø Access to funding for Metrolink 3B extensions from DfT regional funding.

7. Next Conference

Thursday 4th February 2010 at NWDA offices, Renaissance House, Warrington.

Attendance

<i>Adrian Dunning</i>	<i>NW TAR</i>
<i>Alan Jackson</i>	<i>Goyt Valley RUA</i>
<i>Alison Chew</i>	<i>GMPTE</i>
<i>Ashley Grumble</i>	<i>Passenger Focus</i>
<i>Bill Harrop</i>	<i>Transport Action Group Manchester</i>
<i>Bob Woolvin</i>	<i>GMPTE</i>
<i>Cedric Green</i>	<i>NCRUG</i>
<i>Charles Agate</i>	
<i>Chris Anslow</i>	<i>Lancs CC</i>
<i>Chris Dale</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Chris Holmes</i>	
<i>Chris Laycock</i>	
<i>Colin Barnett</i>	<i>Bus Users UK</i>
<i>Dave Koring</i>	<i>Shropshire Council</i>
<i>David Burton</i>	<i>SELRAP</i>
<i>David Squire</i>	<i>Arriva NW</i>
<i>David Wilson</i>	<i>TransDev Blazefield</i>
<i>David Yates</i>	<i>FRECCLES</i>
<i>Dennis Harrison</i>	<i>WTUA</i>
<i>Emma Antrobus</i>	<i>NW Rail Campaign</i>
<i>Emma Gilpin</i>	<i>Halton BC</i>
<i>Fred Consterdine</i>	<i>Crewe & Shrewsbury Passrs Assoc</i>
<i>Gabriel Drew</i>	<i>East Cheshire RUG</i>
<i>Geoff Kerr</i>	
<i>George Heron</i>	<i>Bury Green Party</i>
<i>Ian McDermott</i>	<i>North Trafford Rail Group</i>
<i>John Moorhouse</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>John Owen</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Janet Briggs</i>	<i>North Cheshire RUG</i>
<i>Janet Cuff</i>	<i>Ramblers Assoc</i>
<i>John Aaron</i>	
<i>John Culshaw</i>	
<i>John Hart</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>John Murray</i>	<i>Rochdale Transport Partnership</i>

<i>John Ryan</i>	<i>Wirral TUA</i>
<i>Keith Pennyfather</i>	<i>Macclesfield PTLC</i>
<i>Keith Whitmore</i>	<i>GMITA</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>TWNW</i>
<i>Louise Ebbs</i>	<i>First TPE</i>
<i>Malcolm Richardson</i>	<i>BAFRUA</i>
<i>Martyn Davies</i>	<i>Merseytravel</i>
<i>Michael Wrigley</i>	<i>STORM</i>
<i>Michelle Brooke</i>	<i>Passenger Focus</i>
<i>Neil Buxton</i>	<i>ACORP</i>
<i>Neil Caldwell</i>	<i>CILT NW</i>
<i>Nick Vaughan</i>	<i>GMPTE</i>
<i>Paul Fawcett</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Peter Foster</i>	<i>Sustrans</i>
<i>Peter Garvey</i>	
<i>Peter Johnston</i>	
<i>Peter Lamkin</i>	<i>Wrexham Birkenhead RUA</i>
<i>Peter Robinson</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Phil Edwards</i>	<i>North Cheshire RUG</i>
<i>Philip Harrison</i>	
<i>Philip Purdy</i>	<i>GMPTE</i>
<i>Phillipa Sudlow</i>	<i>Confederation of Passenger Transport NW</i>
<i>Richard Rollins</i>	<i>TWNW</i>
<i>Robert Talbot</i>	<i>Lakes Line RUG</i>
<i>Roger Barton</i>	<i>Goyt Valley RUA</i>
<i>Sheila Dee</i>	<i>Chester Shrewsbury Rail Partnership</i>
<i>Stephen Clapham</i>	<i>FRECCLES</i>
<i>Tom Lunt</i>	
<i>Tony Fawthrop</i>	<i>GM Transport Campaign</i>