

TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)

Briefing for the Mayor and Combined Authority of Greater Manchester June 2017



Tram, train and bus photographed in Manchester for the 'Manchester Evening News'

*Working for an integrated and seamless public transport network across the
North West of England*

TravelWatch NorthWest: Briefing for the Mayor and Combined Authority of Greater Manchester

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North West Public Transport Users' Forum Community Interest Company trading as TravelWatch NorthWest

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1. Who We Are

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) was formerly known as the North West Public Transport Users Forum (NWPTUF). The NWPTUF was formed in October 2003 and was named TravelWatch NorthWest in 2006. It is an independent Community Interest Company run by a Board of Directors, representing all users of public transport in the North West. Membership is open to any not for profit organisation representing the interests of users or potential users of public transport.

1.2 TWNW's chief purpose is to influence, by research and campaigning, public transport policy in the North West always with passengers' interests foremost. Our Annual Report is published on our website: www.travelwatch-northwest.org.uk along with our study reports, news releases and conference and consultation documents.

1.3 TWNW has established a relationship with a wide range of stakeholders, and has addressed a number of key issues within the transport agenda in the region. It is increasingly being seen as an important sounding board for consultation on regional transport policies.

1.4 TWNW will continue to press for passengers to be at the centre of all transport planning, both for major schemes and for local changes to the current networks.

2. What We Do

2.1 Since our inception we have:

- **Responded to 100 consultations and calls for evidence** including over 20 submissions to the House of Commons Transport Select Committee (appearing before the Committee to give live evidence on two occasions)
- **Held 35 conferences around the region** (the 36th was at Merseytravel in June), three per year, all featuring leading transport industry speakers.
- **Produced 28 study reports** on subjects ranging from quality of service on rail and on bus including terminals to concessionary bus passes, rail replacement buses and multi modal ticketing. (Our work on the English National Travel Scheme (ENCTS) was carried out at the request of the Senior Traffic Commissioner, Beverley Bell, in 2015).
- **Carried out numerous investigative and "mystery shopper" exercises**, including some on a contractual basis for transport operators and providers.
- **Worked collaboratively with** bodies such as Transport Focus, the Campaign for Better Transport, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, Bus Users UK, Railfuture, North West Transport Roundtable and Community Rail bodies.

3. Transport Related Powers of the Mayor and Combined Authority

3.1 The requests on behalf of public transport users contained within this paper are based on TWNW's understanding of the new powers that will be available to the Greater Manchester Mayor and the Combined Authority as set out in the Department for Communities and Local Government: "Devolution: A Mayor for Greater Manchester: What Does it Mean?" published on April 12th 2017. See -

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/608528/Plain_English_Guides_to_Devolution_Greater_Manchester.pdf

3.2 This document states that the Mayor and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority will be responsible, amongst other things, for

- The Local Transport Plan (LTP) – which must be agreed by 7 out of the 10 members of the CA before it is adopted. The LTP can set out how transport is envisaged to support housing and the economy, what measures are to be taken to tackle road safety, congestion and air pollution and joint enterprises with Highways England and the individual local authorities on building, improving and maintaining roads.
- Bus franchising. This will include deciding on rules, routes, timetables and fares. The Mayor can also award grants.
- Land and Development. The Mayor will be responsible for the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework which will overlay the Local Plans and also have the power to acquire and dispose of land to build houses, provide employment space and infrastructure. This includes the right to use compulsory purchase powers.
- The Mayor and CA will also have access to an investment fund for local priorities worth £900m over 30 years and access to business rates and the right to ask for an additional payment of 2p in the pound from businesses. In addition, the Mayor will have the power to set a 'precept' – a charge on council tax bills – to help pay for the Mayor's work and the CA will be able to borrow money up to a cap agreed by government. There is also a functional 'power of competence' granted to the Mayor and the CA, meaning they can legally do anything that individuals can legally do.

3.3 We are avid proponents of public transport and the contribution it can make to reducing road congestion and contribute to the environment. The passenger interest is key from our perspective and there is a long way to go to make public transport sufficiently appealing to attract more of the vast number of car users.

3.4 TWNW firmly trusts that the new powers will be utilised to provide a first class public transport system that is –

- Accessible to everyone
- Affordable and socially inclusive
- Available where and when it is needed
- Acceptable to all
- Attractive to users

4. The Outreach of Greater Manchester

4.1 Manchester is viewed as the capital of the North West by people living outside the boundaries of Greater Manchester and could also be labelled as the capital of the North and maybe Britain's 2nd city. It possesses an international recognition of one of Britain's major cities and serves a population of up to 20 million residents in its outreach. However its performance in proving for its outreach is sometimes deemed to fall short of expectation.

4.2 Northern residents travel to Manchester for a variety of reasons:

- International travel through Manchester Airport
- Business & Commerce – Headquarters of major companies, Govt. Departments.

- Commuting – maximum 1 hr 20 minutes from much of outreach
- Shopping – City Centre, Bury market, Trafford Centre, Lowry mall etc.
- Healthcare – Regional Specialist Centres e.g. Christies
- Spectator Sports – Football, Rugby, Athletics Cycling etc.
- Entertainment & Culture – Theatres, Arena, Events, Museums etc.
- Long Distance Train Interchange – Manchester Piccadilly

4.3 The general information provision and travel convenience to those residing outside Greater Manchester requires a major marketing makeover. Websites are often difficult to navigate, are not related in their information provision and generally unattractive. Provision for onward travel within GM is often poorly promoted. The Mayor should take a corporate view of how the City and its districts promotes itself and its transport networks to then wider region to achieve better consistency.

4.4 The Mayor will have much to do to address the needs of those from the NW regional provinces who use Greater Manchester as their regional capital. Much of that work is simple attention to detail and presentation as well as capital projects. By doing so the City and the GM region will benefit from better appreciation, growth, image and sustainable traffic.

5. TWNW's aspirations for buses

5.1 Over the last 30 years the inequity between London, where bus services were not deregulated and the rest of the UK has been starkly apparent. Maintaining regulation in London has meant passengers pay set fares, the buses look the same and changes such as passengers needing pre-paid or concessionary tickets, an Oyster or a contactless payment card to travel were introduced across the board. Manchester has no such system.

5.2 However, in the Manchester conurbation despite a decline in patronage and declining bus travel it still accounts for 79% of all public transport journeys. Currently passengers across GM are using buses run by over 20 bus operators largely in competition. GM passengers have seen a disparity in fares, inconsistent services and routes axed partly because of funding constraints on subsidised services.

5.3 There is now an opportunity to introduce a properly integrated system, building on any improvements already in place. The following areas would benefit passengers

-

- Integrated and multi operator ticketing
- Bus priority measure to improve journey times
- Ability to cross subsidise to maintain less used but socially essential routes
- A sea change in information provision – real time visual and audible information on buses, real time information at bus stations and stops.
- Improved procedures for passenger input including a properly publicised complaints procedure on buses and elsewhere.
- Better more easily available advance information about bus fares
- Impartial Information offices at bus stations covering all operators.

5.4 London bus stops have real time departure information and buses in London have real time visual and audible bus stop information. The only examples we know of to date in Greater Manchester are on the Leigh guided busway and the Metroshuttle. Visual and audible information covering stopping patterns and next stop

should be fitted to new vehicles as standard as per the London model. Also, departure information at all bus stations should be real time.

5.5 A greater level of segregation is needed using segregated busways (not guided) and bus only streets and roads where possible in addition to conventional bus lanes. Also bus priorities should be engineered using similar standards as for segregated tramways.

5.6 A simpler bus network should be designed for Greater Manchester, one which has higher frequencies and better service levels in the evenings and weekends. And a more comprehensive night bus network. Fares should be more transparent and with comprehensive inter availability amongst operators. At present, single-operator ticketing means that a return or multi journey ticket is not always available on a route.

5.7 Complaints procedures are not well publicised. There should be a notice prominently displayed in all vehicles used on all bus services explaining how and to whom complaints can be made and giving contact details of the appeals procedure.

5.8 Road works are a cause of poor punctuality. There is a need for much better dialogue and partnership working amongst the various agencies. This should include a maximum number of pre-planned works over specific sections of road (this would vary depending on the nature/ length of each work site) to ensure minimum delays.

5.9 We note that the 'Alliance' system used in Merseyside is being regarded more favourably by TfGM and believe this should be encouraged. As the alliance system allows transport authorities and operators to jointly fund all aspects of bus services - from the vehicles to infrastructure and bus priority measures to integrated ticketing – it opens up more possibilities for funding marginal and unprofitable routes as part of the overall package. Another advantage is that third parties can make contributions e.g. major employers. The full franchise system will stretch budgets to the maximum. There needs to be other funding sources other than the tax payer.

6 TWNW's aspirations for Metrolink

6.1 The Manchester Metrolink system continues to expand and is widely appreciated by its users. It does however tend to operate to some extent as a stand-alone concern, whilst it should become much more integrated with the overall transport network, especially rail.

6.2 We have campaigned for the need, as Metrolink rolls out, for greater integration with other modes especially through ticketing with rail services. Little progress has been made such that -

- It is still not possible to buy a ticket from Metrolink stations to any national rail station outside Greater Manchester (e.g. Bury to London).
- National rail tickets routed via Manchester originating or finishing outside Greater Manchester and involving a change of station between Piccadilly and Victoria do not include travel on Metrolink.
- Other deficiencies include routing anomalies as the system grows. For example a ticket from Hebden Bridge to Oldham would assume route via Victoria rather than the more convenient change at Rochdale. It could be cheaper to buy separate tickets in these circumstances.
- By and large (with some exceptions e.g. Oldham) National Rail Enquiries does

not recognise any Metrolink station even though there are through fares from rail.

6.3 From the point of view of visitors to the city who are unfamiliar with the system information could be improved. For example we would like to see proper information/ announcements in trams about interchange opportunities with heavy rail or buses. Many passengers do not appreciate the distinction between Piccadilly Gardens and Piccadilly stations. It would be clearer if on-tram announcements stipulated Piccadilly station (not just Piccadilly) to avoid confusion. The Victoria – Piccadilly journey should be recognised as a major link for longer distance travellers and announcements/ information should be clearer in this respect. Metrolink route maps show letters to indicate routes – these letters should be shown on individual trams.

6.4 We believe a Metrolink extension to Urmston would be more cost effective than a speculative one to Port Salford as proposed in the Greater Manchester Strategy. Potential tram train routes should be investigated particularly to the South and South East of the city. A reservation would be that the benefits of being part of the national rail network should not be lost and also the provision of toilets on longer journeys should be considered.

7. TWNW's Aspirations for Heavy Rail

7.1 TWNW is well aware that neither the new Mayor of Manchester nor the CA will have direct powers over heavy rail but they will have influence and close links with Rail North/ Transport for the North. There could be investment opportunities in conjunction with Network Rail. Transport for Greater Manchester has submitted a proposal to Government for the transfer of Greater Manchester rail stations to local control. We are pleased that we are being consulted in this process, which could bring merit.

7.2 Traditional railway stations are usually the beginning and end of every rail journey and many of them do not meet passenger expectations, deterring some users. Upgrading is required and it would be beneficial for the Mayor to review the recommendations about minimum standards contained in the "Better Stations" report written by Sir Peter Hall and Chris Green, published in 2009. <http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20100409091328/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/passenger/stations/betterrailstations/>. We also want to see new stations being opened and closed ones re-opened wherever feasible.

7.3 We urge that consultation with passenger groups takes place when improvements are planned. For example the newly refurbished Manchester Victoria station is spectacular with its iconic new roof. However the general condition of the gloomy platforms 3 - 6 leaves much to be desired, with poor overall level of lighting, lack of on platform seating and generally faded overall ambience. Also the overall roof does not cover the whole of platforms 1 & 2 and a substantial area where trains stand is open to the elements. (The Metrolink platforms have shelters outside the roof cover).

7.4 There is an urgent need for capacity and service level increases. We are not convinced that the prospect of new trains in the future, welcome though this is, will adequately cater for the ongoing growth in demand. Prospective passengers are already (and have been for some time) discouraged from using rail because of full to

capacity trains at peak times and grossly inadequate car parking space at many stations. We understand that the design of the new trains for Arriva Rail North will comprise self-contained 2 and 3 car sets with no end corridor connections. This is less flexible and convenient for passengers compared with most current designs running on Northern that have end gangway connections.

7.5 Seating capacity /length of trains needs to be tackled – this implies longer platforms at many stations. There is an urgent need for enhanced track capacity improvements to permit more trains and to permit freight which does not interfere with passenger services. In terms of in-train facilities, two specific and basic necessities demand detailed attention -

- Toilets on trains – there is a need for a standard seat/ number of toilets ratio - anecdotally there are probably too few now and their condition and operational functioning can often be suspect.
- Leg room – this seems to have progressively worsened over the years in many cases – a philosophy of cramming more seats in to save on the number of carriages needed (often with detrimental effects on luggage space) with attendant cost savings.

7.6 Transport for the North and Rail North are working on various strands of strategic rail development, culminating in a Strategic Transport Plan, that no doubt the Mayor will have an input to. We would like to see included –

- Electrification of the North TransPennine route
- More through trains to Windermere including electrification of the branch.
- Reinstating CrossCountry destinations (SW & S Coast) from Wigan
- Pursue Western Rail Extension to Manchester Airport. This would significantly improve the capacity of the Airport station and open new route options to Cheshire and North Wales.
- Extending the electrified Merseyrail network to Wigan
- Increased car parking at stations in general

8. Integration, Integration, Integration

8.1 We deem one of the main tasks for the new Mayor, working with his CA colleagues and with TfGM, will be to ensure that all forms of public transport are brought together to provide a fully integrated, accessible, safe and affordable system throughout the CA area.

8.2 Multi modal ticketing, as in the Netherlands and London, is essential to grow the public transport market and permit seamless travel. But there must be a simple fares system, including multi modal on demand ticketing, based on zonal travel using smartcard/contactless payment.

8.3 We approve of the Bus and ticketing systems that prevail in London though this does come at a high cost. According to a study published at the beginning of May which compared the cost of living in 47 cities around the world, London's public transport system is the most expensive by a long way. The average cost of a Monthly travelcard in London was £135 some 30% more expensive than Dublin, the second most costly city and 50% more than New York.

8.4 Information should be easy to obtain and understandable in many forms and should not just be reliant on web-based systems. There is still a sizeable section of the community which relies on paper timetable leaflets and displayed information at bus and rail stations. In this context bus stations **must** have information about nearby rail services and, correspondingly rail stations and bus services.

8.5 Due consideration must be given to providing free travel to all who are in full time education and training and there should be schemes to allow the unemployed to have easier access to jobs.

8.6 Integration should also extend beyond Greater Manchester's borders to address the needs of those who use it as their regional capital. Much better cross-boundary working is called for not just between metropolitan areas but between metropolitan areas and their hinterlands. Greater Manchester could set a shining example of how to do best. We would like assist in this endeavour.

9. Our Outputs and Our Potential

9.1 In the last year TOWNW has responded to, amongst other things, the consultation on the Greater Manchester Strategy, the Bus Services Bill, the West Coast Rail Franchise and the House of Commons Transport Committee call for evidence on Rail Franchising. In the same period we produced study reports on West Coast Main Line Improvement Works, Section 106 Agreements and Public Transport and Integration between Rail and Bus at Railway stations.

9.2 We also took part in the consultation events organised by the Campaign for Better Transport, feeding in to Transport for the North's evolving strategy. All this work was in addition to our usual schedule of conferences and our meetings with transport procurers and providers.

9.3 We are a very proactive and committed body of people representing a wide constituency of interests that promote public transport. In view of this and the work we are undertaking we would like to be represented on any relevant bodies dealing with public transport in Greater Manchester and to have the opportunity to carry out any relevant projects that would benefit the Mayor and CA. Within our membership we have a considerable depth of resource of experienced public transport users together with professional transport expertise. This makes the organisation well capable of carrying out passenger based research.

9.4 We would like to meet the Mayor to speak more about our work.

9.5 For further details about the work of TravelWatch NorthWest please contact:-

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