

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

promoting quality public transport.....

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

## Briefing for the Mayor and Combined Authority of the Liverpool City Region June 2017



Artist's impression of new tram scheme that was planned by Merseytravel but which was formally closed down in 2013



Merseytravel has managed the Mersey-rail concession since taking it over from the Department for Transport in 2003

***Would-be tram, plus a bus and a train photographed in Liverpool***

***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 Liverpool City Region***

## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
1. Who we are	3
2. What we do	3
3. Transport related powers of the Mayor & CA	3
4. The Outreach of Liverpool	4
5. TOWNW'S aspirations for buses	5
6. TOWNW's aspirations for a light rail system	6
7. TOWNW's aspirations for heavy rail	6
8. Integration, Integration, Integration	7
9. Our outputs and our potential	8

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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](http://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 36 conferences around the region** (the 36<sup>th</sup> was held 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 Liverpool City Region Mayor and the Combined Authority as set out in the Department for Communities & Local Government document: "Devolution: A Mayor for Liverpool City Region: What Does it Mean?" published on April 12<sup>th</sup> 2017. See - [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/60852/2/Plain\\_English\\_Guides\\_to\\_Devolution\\_Liverpool.PDF](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/60852/2/Plain_English_Guides_to_Devolution_Liverpool.PDF)

This document states that the Mayor and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority will be responsible, amongst other things, for

- The Local Transport Plan (LTP) (which, we note, can be rejected by a two-thirds majority). 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 Liverpool City Region 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 be able to invest £900m over 30 years and have access to business rates. 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 to the environment. The passenger interest is paramount 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 Liverpool**

4.1 Liverpool is one of the top five city destinations for overseas tourists in the UK. It has a healthy, growing economy and the largest Freeport Zone in the UK. The Port of Liverpool is already the top UK port for container trade with the USA and Canada but the ongoing developments and expansion there will double container capacity. Liverpool’s Virgin rail link to London is the most punctual service on the West Coast Main Line and Merseyrail’s internal network, consisting of 66 stations (five underground) and 600 weekday train services, is one of the most intensively used in the UK. More than 1.2 million people live within 35 minutes travelling time of Liverpool City Region and 6.8 million live within a 60 minute catchment.

4.2 Not only is Merseyside the second city in the North West its influence and City Region extends across North Wales and transport links from that region are very important and can be improved.

4.3 North West and North Wales residents travel to Liverpool for a variety of reasons:

- International travel through John Lennon Airport & on cruise ships
- Business & Commerce – Vauxhall, Peel Holdings/Logistics, Daresbury.
- Commuting – Merseyrail supports 34 million passenger journeys p.a. and Merseytravel has Centre of Excellence status for integrated travel
- Shopping – Albert Dock, Liverpool One
- Healthcare – Specialist Centre, Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital
- Football – Two Premier League football clubs
- Entertainment & Culture – Theatres, Arena, Events, Museums inc Tate
- Ferries – to the Isle of Man, Ireland and the Wirral

## **5. TWNW's aspirations for buses**

5.1 TWNW understands that the first elected Mayor of Liverpool City Region has promised to only buy clean hydrogen buses from 2020 and to bring buses back in to public control. We welcome all initiatives to make bus services more attractive to passengers and potential passengers.

5.2 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. Neither Manchester nor Liverpool City Region has such a system.

5.3 The Alliance system of bus operation, a partnership between Merseytravel and bus operators appears to be starting to work in passengers interests. There is now an opportunity to build on this and 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 measures 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. 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.

5.6 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. All of this ought to be easier to introduce into Liverpool City Region than many other places because of the 'Alliance' system in operation. This also opens up more possibilities for funding marginal and unprofitable routes as part of the overall package.

5.7 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.

5.8 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.

5.9 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.

5.10 Although Merseytravel has gleaned accolades in recent times - and TravelWatch NorthWest congratulates them for that – not everything related to public transport has been commendable. We were particularly dismayed by the removal of the bus lanes in Liverpool and sincerely hope that the new City Region Mayor will look carefully at all means to promote bus priority. Modal shift away from cars will not be achieved by removing priority from public transport.

5.11 A simple, easy-to-understand bus route map needs to be created.

## **6 TWNW's aspirations for a light rail system**

6.1 The Manchester Metrolink system continues to expand and is widely appreciated by its users. It has been responsible for removing thousands of road trips from Manchester's roads. TWNW can see benefits of such a system in the Liverpool City Region.

6.2 At the time that Merseytravel formally closed down its tram system plans in 2013, the concept of devolving powers from central government to Combined Authorities had not been mooted and nor had the proposition of having directly elected Mayors. With the election of the first 'Metro Mayor' of Liverpool City Region and the devolution of new transport powers and funding, a new era has been entered into and it is to be hoped that the possibility of having a light rail system as part of the Merseytravel offer will be examined once more. And it should be examined as part of a fully integrated concept.

## **7. TWNW's Aspirations for Heavy Rail**

7.1 TWNW notes and applauds the newly elected city region mayor's desire to improve the freight-only rail link into the Port of Liverpool. This is a much under-used asset.

7.2 Merseyrail not only already has responsibility for its local heavy rail system but it was the winner of the 'operator of the year' award a few years ago, something we commend them for.

7.3 There is of course always room for improvement and we welcome the plans for new rolling stock on the Merseyrail system. We understand that the new trains will benefit from the flexibility to operate both on the third rail system on the Merseyrail system and on the overhead DC system which is now in existence on the City lines to St Helens, Wigan and Manchester. We would make the point that some journeys on Merseyrail can be up to an hour and some would become longer with future extensions and we feel that passengers would appreciate the provision of toilets which are not available now.

7.4 Such future extensions should include to at least beyond Bidston on the Wirral (if not as far as Wrexham) and also from Ormskirk to Preston and from Kirby to Wigan. Rail access to Skelmersdale should be a high priority. We also look forward to the scheme to develop the Halton Curve, restoring direct connectivity to Wrexham and North Wales from Liverpool and Liverpool Airport. Ultimately we would wish to see the latter directly rail served.

7.5 Services from Southport to the south side of Manchester should be safeguarded as surveys have shown a preference for Piccadilly as opposed to Victoria as the Manchester destination. Also services from Southport to the north via a curve at Burscough should be explored for restoration.

7.6 Whilst TWNW appreciates that the CA and Merseytravel are not responsible for TransPennine's franchise, we believe they will have a significant influence. We applaud the restoration of through train services from Liverpool to Glasgow and would like to see further developments encouraged. At present public transport access to/from the north beyond Preston is non-existent.

## **8. Integration, Integration, Integration**

8.1 We deem one of the main tasks for the new mayor, working with his CA colleagues and with Merseytravel, 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 TWNW welcomes the new mayor's promise to promote walking and cycling. This is a laudable aim and one we hope will lead to more cycle parking facilities at railway stations. The facility to take one's bike on a train should not be overlooked and indeed any enhancements to this would be appreciated.

8.4 At times of disruption to passengers' journeys on the railway because of improvement works such as Liverpool Lime Street integration becomes paramount.

Clear and accurate information and the quality of rail replacement services are key considerations.

8.5 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.

8.6 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.

8.7 It is also imperative that integration extends beyond the borders of Liverpool city region. Much better cross-boundary working is called for, not just between metropolitan areas but between metropolitan areas and their hinterlands.

## **9. Our Outputs and Our Potential**

9.1 In the last year TWNW has responded to, amongst other things, 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 Liverpool City Region 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 City Region Mayor to speak more about our work.

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

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