

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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

***promoting quality public transport.....***

TfN Draft Transport Plan Consultation  
 IPSOS Mori North  
 Freepost Admail 4275  
 MANCHESTER  
 M60 1HE

17<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Dear Mr Cridland,

## **Transport for the North Draft Strategic Transport Plan**

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in NW England. I am writing to give our views on the Strategic Transport Plan. We broadly welcome the thrust of the plan. As you know public transport in the North currently suffers widely from inadequate infrastructure and resource capacity. 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. Generally we look to more emphasis on rail transport and bus priority, rather than simplistic road expansion.

### ***Rail***

Many passengers using the rail network, particularly away from the West Coast and East Coast Main Lines suffer from outdated trains. They are discouraged from travelling because of severe overcrowding and lack of car park capacity. In the more rural areas services can be infrequent and of poor standard with time-served trains.

Much more can be done to improve rail capacity and services on top of the new franchise commitments to new trains which will, on present estimates, fall substantially short in dealing with current suppressed demand and the growth in demand. More track capacity and more electrification is urgently needed.

Taking up the electrification issue, we are sceptical about the use of bi-mode (diesel & electric) trains instead of full electric trains as their performance will be inferior and slower as diesel engines add weight that has to be carried around all the time. Moreover operating and maintenance costs of bi-mode are likely to be higher than electric trains over their life. We firmly believe that the Windermere line, TransPennine and other major routes including the Calder Valley should be fully electrified.

Northern Powerhouse Rail investment is vital to improve connectivity and its scope should be reviewed to ensure capacity improvements are fully maximised. Pressing need for more capacity on the Oxford Road corridor and grade separation at Piccadilly.

The Plan postulates some ambitious ideas for new TransPennine links between Manchester and Leeds and Manchester and Sheffield. We will follow these developments with interest. Notwithstanding any ambitious plans the Hope Valley line suffers from inadequate infrastructure capacity and this has to be addressed.

### ***Public Transport on roads***

On the roads we are consciously aware of the decline in bus travel – there is little mention of bus services in the Plan. Our rural areas in particular have seen swingeing local authority led cuts to service provision and road congestion increasingly causes problems especially in urban areas. The latter would benefit from more bus priority measures. Buses must be seen as an intrinsic part of the strategic transport network. There is much that could be done to make them more passenger friendly –

- Accurate, up to date timetable and other information should be displayed in cases at bus stops and bus stations. Many bus stops, particularly rural, have no information of bus times displayed at all. The operator of all services should be shown, as some passengers may have operator specific tickets.
- There should be real time information at bus stops and bus stations, especially at major stops - ideally at all bus stops. This must be “real-time”, not timetable times. With GPS now widespread digital real time displays should be mandatory at all locations.
- Visual and audible information covering stopping patterns and next stop should be fitted to all new vehicles as standard as per the London model. In the meantime consideration should be given to audible location announcements during journeys.
- Clear instructions should be displayed for the use of passes on boarding the bus.

The above measures are lacking in much of our region.

### ***Sea Ports and Airports***

We would just say that better non-car passenger connections are vital - sea ports in particular are often neglected in this respect.

### ***Integration and Light Rail***

Just one page of the plan is devoted to Integration – much more needs to be done to encourage people to use these options.

There is little mention of Light Rail. Its success in Manchester in particular deserves applause though much more needs to be done to improve integration with other modes such as enhanced through ticketing measures.

### **Corridors**

#### *Energy Coast*

A major upgrade is required throughout the Cumbrian Coast line and on the Tyne Valley line. These are vital routes for freight as well as passengers. Also as referred to above there is a demand for extra services and electrification on the Windermere branch

#### *West and Wales*

There should be connections from all parts of North Wales to Merseyside incorporating a rail link to Liverpool Airport (all major airports should have a direct rail connection) and including Wrexham and the Borders area, not just the North Wales coast. Links, especially rail, between Merseyside/ Crewe and Derby/the East Midlands are very poor and require solutions. The use of the Manchester Ship Canal for more heavy freight would help to alleviate the pressure on roads.

#### *Central Corridor and Yorkshire to Scotland*

Both the Bentham line and the Settle – Carlisle line have underused potential. In the Yorkshire to Scotland section there is no apparent mention of rail and the Settle Carlisle line which is a natural direct link with potential for development. We would stress the importance and need for development of links between the Fylde Coast/East Lancashire and West Yorkshire/ Manchester. Part of this could be the reopening of the Skipton to Colne line which if appropriately accomplished would facilitate freight as well as passengers.

### **Stronger Partnerships**

The document says on page 80 -

“TfN also wants to continue to work closely and collaboratively with other successful, existing partnerships and networks. These include N8, TechNorth, the Institute for Transport Studies, Campaign for Better Transport, the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, IPPR North and others to ensure TfN’s vision and objectives are delivered.” Please add Transport Focus (the national statutory passengers representative organisation) and ourselves as we carry out similar representative work in our region.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

*John A Moorhouse*

John Moorhouse  
Company Secretary