
Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 7 July 2017

Subject: May 2018 Rail Timetables: Northern and Trans-Pennine Express

Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12a, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1	

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To set out the proposed responses to three consultations being carried out by the two important train operating companies (“TOCs”), Northern (“NT”, operated by Arriva Rail North) and Trans-Pennine Express (“TP”, operated by First Group):
- (i) NT, regarding their proposed timetable changes in May 2018;
 - (ii) A second NT consultation regarding possible future train journey-time improvements (the draft response is contained within the same document as above); and
 - (iii) TP, also regarding their proposed timetable changes in May 2018; and to seek Transport Committee’s endorsement of those formal responses, as sent out to Transport Committee members on 26 June 2017.

2 Information

- 2.1 NT and TP provide the bulk of the local and inter-regional rail services for the Leeds City Region. Both franchises are committed to introducing significant changes to train services affecting the LCR, including a wide range of improvements. The Transport Committee report dated 14 October 2016 [item 7, *Developing the Rail Franchises serving the Leeds City Region*] sets out the context of the franchises and WYCA’s perspectives on their future development. Under the franchise agreements, it was expected that the bulk of the most important changes would be introduced in the December 2017 timetable change, with further changes due in December 2019. However, as set out in the Committee report dated 24 February 2017 [item 12, *December 2017 rail timetable changes*], due to delays to Network Rail infrastructure improvements, most December 2017 service changes had to be delayed until May 2018. It is the May 2018 timetable change on which NT and TP are now consulting.

- 2.2 Separately, NT are also carrying out within the same timescales a consultation on the potential for improvements to trains' journey-times, i.e. faster services. It seeks our views on where we consider such improvements could be delivered on their network, and on how the improvements could be implemented, such as through changes to infrastructure, rolling stock or timetables.
- 2.3 The consultations began on 2 May 2017 (NT) and 7 May 2017 (TP). Since then, we have met informally with both TOCs to give them advance notice, in a spirit of co-operation, of areas of potential concern. The deadline for consultation responses is 7 July 2017, which is of course the date of this Transport Committee meeting. For this reason:
- (a) The two TOCs have been made aware that the issues raised by WYCA officers, of which details have been submitted in advance of the 7 July deadline, are provisional and subject to approval (and any amendments made) by Transport Committee; TP and NT have confirmed that they are comfortable with this;
 - (b) WYCA will therefore contact the two TOCs again once the outcome of today's Transport Committee meeting is known, to confirm the responses submitted and/or submit any additions/amendments.
- 2.4 Copies of the two proposed responses were sent out to members in advance of this meeting, on 26 June 2017. The main points are summarised in this report.
- 2.5 Taking both franchises' changes together, it should be emphasised that, while the consultation responses identify some concerns, the overall picture is that the May 2018 timetables proposed imply significant improvements to services in the LCR.

May 2018 timetable: Issues affecting both Northern and Trans-Pennine Express

- 2.6 Of the issues that have been identified, a few cut across the franchises as they are about how the operations inter-relate. They include:
- Poor connections between different train operators' services, such as from Manchester or London via Leeds to Harrogate, Skipton or Ilkley.
 - Fewer services in the peak at certain places, taking NT and TP together, including Cross Gates, Garforth and East Garforth in the evening peak.
 - Concerns at peak services at Slaithwaite and Marsden, taking NT and TP together.
- 2.7 Another issue identified as affecting both operators, and highlighted in our proposed responses, is that on several routes there are few or no additional trains in the peaks. This clearly means that, if crowding is to be addressed while allowing growth, the reliable delivery of strengthening (i.e. longer trains at peak times) will be critical.

May 2018 timetable: Trans-Pennine Express

- 2.8 On the Trans-Pennine Express side, there are relatively few issues and concerns. The new timetable sees significant improvements to interurban connectivity with earlier first and later last trains, additional trains to Newcastle, better services at Dewsbury, and a 'tidying-up' of timetable to give a much better spacing of the four hourly fast trains between Leeds and Manchester (approximately 15 minutes apart). There is also a raising of many Sunday services to levels similar to other days. Issues that have, however, been identified include:

- Service patterns at Slaithwaite and Marsden;
- Potential performance (i.e. punctuality) risks;
- Timing of the last train from Leeds to South Milford (possible drafting error);
- Sunday services at Deighton and Ravensthorpe.

Other than South Milford, these issues are not unexpected, but we are hopeful that this and the Deighton / Ravensthorpe questions may be capable of being addressed.

May 2018 timetable: Northern Issues

- 2.9 With regard to Northern, again there is a wide range of welcome improvements, including routes which will enjoy one or more of:

- Earlier first trains – such as into Huddersfield from Bradford;
- Later last trains – for example, from Leeds to the Calder Valley;
- Better frequencies (weekdays, Saturdays and/or Sundays) – such as four trains per hour in the daytime between Leeds and Harrogate, and a new service from Knottingley and Pontefract to Leeds via Featherstone and Wakefield); and
- Through services to destinations (such as Manchester Airport from the Calder Valley or Chester from Leeds) that previously needed a change of trains.

- 2.10 However, there are several concerns, which can be divided into three categories:

(a) ***Breaches of the Train Service Requirement ("TSR")***, the section of the Franchise Agreement which sets out the levels of service that the franchisee is obliged to run. These include first trains that are not early enough, last trains that are too early, and train frequencies falling short of requirements. We understand that at least some of these TSR breaches may be the result of errors by NT, and they are looking into them. Any that are intended would need NT to apply for derogations from the TSR, which Rail North (and WYCA) may or may not support.

(b) ***Services that comply with requirements (TSR) in a way that is not optimal***: These often reflect the way in which the TSR leaves a very wide discretion for operating companies to choose how to provide services, rather than prescribing what might be seen as the optimal way to do so. There are however also examples of things that the TSR did not cover. Examples include:

- Sub-optimal clockface patterns on the Calder Valley which have negative consequences including poor connectivity at Mytholmroyd and Sowerby

Bridge and irregular service gaps between Leeds and Bradford/Halifax. The result is slower real-world journeys for some links (such as Upper Calder to Huddersfield), many average waiting times longer than now (including a markedly worse Leeds – Bradford – Halifax service), and a loss of several direct connections.

- Interchange options via Shipley being lost, and poor coordination between different NT routes for journeys across Leeds (e.g. Castleford – Skipton).
- Seeming under-specification of the numbers of peak trains, e.g. east of Leeds.
- Undesirable stopping patterns, such as Church Fenton, Slaithwaite and Marsden.

(c) ***Areas where the TSR fell short of WYCA's aspirations and NT have not exceeded requirements:*** There are areas where the franchise specification disappointed WYCA, and we had hoped that NT would see a case for going beyond the TSR, along the lines of the priorities set out in the report to Transport Committee dated 14 October 2016 (the main points of which are attached at **Appendix 1**):

- Only one train per hour at Kirkstall Forge (and, on Sundays only, at Apperley Bridge).
- Sunday services, particularly first arrivals into Leeds on some lines, but also disappointing service frequencies on others.
- The absence on Sundays or after mid-evening of Leeds-Dewsbury-Brighouse-Calder Valley-Manchester trains; this was a surprising omission from the TSR, and we have repeated WYCA's disappointment that NT have yet to set out plans to introduce a full service on this important route.
- The Castleford-Wakefield-Huddersfield service also does not run on Sundays.
- The Dearne Valley (York – Pontefract – Sheffield) and Goole lines remain skeleton services of little practical usefulness (known as 'parliamentary services' because they have historically been operated to avoid going through the statutory closure processes needed when fully withdrawing the services).

2.11 As noted above, we are discussing all these issues with the train operator and hope that some may be capable of rectification in revised draft May 2018 timetables. Others may take longer to address, but could be picked up in later timetable changes (a further major change is planned for December 2019). There are however likely to remain other matters that are for longer-term service development, but WYCA will continue to develop the case for these, working alongside Rail North and NT colleagues (and, where relevant, Network Rail too). We are also discussing all the issues raised (including but not only TSR breaches) with Rail North colleagues.

2.12 It is worth pointing out that in some cases there may be a causal link between sub-optimal service patterns and infrastructure specification. For example, we are informed by Northern that the proposed times of Calder Valley trains are largely dictated by the constraints of running trains across Manchester. Those are heavily influenced by the way in which the Northern Hub has been delivered, which makes all of Manchester extremely tight: DfT has so far not fully funded the Hub, meaning that capacity improvements expected for example at Oxford Road and Piccadilly are absent, which has consequences across both sides of the city and far beyond.

- 2.13 The consequence is the real risk that the additional services provided will not deliver the passenger (and so wider economic) benefits envisaged in the Northern Hub business case. For example, on Sundays an extra train will run on the Calder Valley line between Leeds and Manchester via Bradford, doubling the service to two per hour. However, under the proposed May 2018 timetable, the trains on that line would be so bunched together in the timetable that the effective intervals between services would for many passenger journeys be no better than now, and in some cases could even be worse. This therefore underlines that there is a need for substantial rail capacity upgrades across the North's bottlenecks, which should be designed in a way that is properly integrated with train service specifications and specimen timetables, but also fully funded and delivered without delay.

Northern consultation on journey-time improvements

- 2.14 With regard to the parallel consultation on journey-time improvements, we propose to respond emphasising that better journey times are a high priority for WYCA, with a clear base of supporting empirical evidence underlying Rail Plan 7 and the Yorkshire Rail Network Study. It is WYCA's view that there are many routes on which rail's journey times are not competitive with car travel, and do not meet modern expectations; contrasting these with lines that have been comprehensively modernised (such as the Ilkley and Skipton electric services) underlines what can be achieved with the right approach. The delivery of NT's new fleets of diesel and electric trains provides a good opportunity to consider these questions.
- 2.15 We propose emphasising the various technical ways in which permissible linespeeds might be increased (including cost-effective ways such as considering faster running for lightweight units only rather than all trains including freight); the scope for improved working practices to accelerate journeys; and the extent to which better timetabled connections between trains can make end-to-end real-world journeys much faster – as well as more significant investments such as realigning routes or electrification, which should be supported where there is a clear case to do so (and pressure should be put on Network Rail to ensure cost-efficient schemes are generated). We propose, conversely, not supporting measures which achieve faster end-to-end journeys by skip-stopping or omitting station-stops, where this would make services worse for some users; nor supporting measures where faster running is 'lost' in poor punctuality (or used to compensate for it).
- 2.16 Linespeed improvements are expected to be delivered in the coming years on the Leeds – Huddersfield – Manchester, Leeds – York and Bradford – Calder – Manchester lines. Beyond these, other routes serving the Leeds City Region which would appear to lend themselves to consideration for faster journeys include:
- The routes serving Pontefract Monkhill (via Castleford and via Wakefield);
 - The Hallam line: Leeds – Wakefield Kirkgate – Barnsley – Sheffield;
 - Leeds to Bradford Interchange;
 - Leeds – Harrogate – Knaresborough – York;
 - [Leeds –] Micklefield – Selby – Hull (route shared with TP);

- [Leeds –] Skipton – Carlisle.

3 Financial Implications

3.1 None.

4 Legal Implications

4.1 None.

5 Staffing Implications

5.1 None.

6 External Consultees

6.1 We have consulted and received input from officers in the five West Yorkshire Districts (and from councillors via them), and received input from various stakeholders such as rail user and business groups. This input has informed the draft consultation responses to the TP and NT consultations. In addition, we have discussed informally the issues identified with TP and NT themselves, with a view to helping the train operators to understand these as soon as possible and so maximising the time available to them for any further timetable refinement work that may be possible or necessary.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 That Transport Committee approve for formal submission the draft consultation responses, as sent out to Transport Committee members on 26 June 2017, for TP and NT.
- 7.2 WYCA officers continue to work with the two TOCs and Rail North to pursue positive outcomes for the Leeds City Region from the May 2018 timetables.

8 Background Documents

8.1 None.