



Report to:	Transport Committee
Date:	16 November 2023
Subject:	Passenger Experience Update Report - Rail
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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To provide an update on the public transport network in West Yorkshire, including an update on the Combined Authority's passenger facing activity.
- 1.2 The report contains an overview of the following:
 - Passenger network performance/reliability.
 - Rail network service changes – proposed.
 - Passenger network enhancements.
 - Rail ticket office closure consultation exercise – update.

2. Information

Passenger Network Performance

- 2.1 Rail strikes have continued to affect the rail network in West Yorkshire in recent months, especially during the summer months. At the time of writing this report, no further strike dates have been set, although the RMT and ASLEF unions are expected to announce further dates, and RMT's strike mandate has been renewed for a further six months.

- 2.2 Since the last update to Transport Committee, punctuality has seen a slight decline for Northern and small increase for TPE. In terms of cancellations, Northern has increased substantially, while TPEs has notably decreased. Time to 3 (Percentage trains calling at station stops within 3 minutes of the planned time) for the most recent four-week period 6 (Aug/Sept) sits at 80.90% for Northern and 70.27% for TPE. Rail network performance data is included in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.3 Cancellations saw Northern at 5.51% (5.81% in the East region) and TPE at 3.42%. These figures exclude cancellations announced by the evening before ('P-coded'), which TPE continues to make use of. More detail of those is detailed below. It is also worth noting in period 5 (Jul/Aug) Northern had a significant peak in cancellations at 7.74%. These were notably worse on south routes, such as, Leeds to Sheffield via Moorthorpe with cancellations at 9.86%.
- 2.4 On TPE, for the most recent period 6 (Aug/Sept), 3.42% (254) of services were cancelled (approximately 1.8% were P-coded and 2.3% were same day cancellations). On Saturdays in the same period 2.1% of services were cancelled (approximately 0.6% were P-coded and 1.5% were same day cancellations). Since the previous report to Transport Committee there has been a reduction in total cancellations (including P-coding) from 11.9% to 4.1%. This is a percentage change of -7.8%. This reflects the full availability of rest-day working in the period. The improving trajectory is welcome, but cancellations are being significantly impacted by ASLEF Action Short of a Strike days, where overtime is banned. Period 5 saw total cancellations including P-codes at 18.4%, which coincided with a number of strike days but TPEs resource position was also affected by drivers taking holiday leave.
- 2.5 As described in more detail in 2.11 below, a revised recovery plan is being introduced by the new leadership team at TPE, which includes a temporary reduced timetable. TPE has suggested that these temporary amendments have been made with the intention that more TPE trains will run on time and cancellations (including p-codes) will be significantly reduced, allowing TPE to operate 15 per cent more services throughout 2024, than would be the case if the timetable was not reduced. It will be important to maintain pressure and secure accountability for the successful delivery of this, to ensure that any temporary measures fully protect the interests of passengers, and to ensure that no measures (such as fleet reduction) are introduced that will hamper the recovery and future growth of TPE.
- 2.6 Northern is also struggling with their traincrew resource which became most apparent during the holiday period when cancellations and service delivery challenges were at a peak as detailed above in 2.4. There are a variety of reasons for this: sickness, increase in train diagrams (movements) at depots due to blockades, and people leaving the business. Coupled with strikes and actions short of strikes in the ongoing national disputes, the situation has been challenging. Northern are also focussing heavily on route learning and driver efficiency, which will help with cover in the long run, but it also takes people out of delivering the on-the-day service.

- 2.7 Network Rail faults contributed to a number of delays to operator performance during the period. The highest contributor was external trespass and vandalism delays, followed by track faults. Network Rail has outlined that there is a continued focus on the prevention and management of all types of trespass, with a combination of community work (schools, mental health support facilities and charities), physical deterrents (fencing, signage, application of forensic markers on cabling) and use of technology (covert and / or smart cameras, BTP drones, etc).
- 2.8 At the time of writing 'leaf fall' is beginning to impact on the railway. Windy conditions can cause heavy leaf-fall in a short space of time and rain means the leaves are more likely to stick to the rails. When trains pass over leaves, the heat and weight of the trains bake them into a thin, slippery layer on the rail. This is equivalent to black ice on the roads. It can and does impact on punctuality.
- 2.9 Network Rail has outlined that this year's strategy for Autumn is based around a staggered start to the RHTT (Rail Head Treatment Train), to account for a late start of Autumn weather (as exemplified by the recent unseasonably warm weather). This is supplemented by local interventions such as Traction Gel Applicators, which spray gel onto the rail which is picked up on wheels. These are placed in locations along lines which have been identified as hot spots, such as the Harrogate, Wharfedale and the Penistone lines. Both the RHTT and the Traction Gel Applicators help to improve the contamination from compacted leaves. This is supplemented with vegetation management along the railway.

Rail Network Service Changes - Proposed

Northern

- 2.10 As set out in the previous Transport Committee report, the Combined Authority wrote to Northern, and then to the Rail North Partnership (RNP), to raise concerns regarding cutbacks from the 10 December 2023 timetable change, in particular the withdrawal of one train on the Penistone line, plus the shortening of trains on the Leeds – Doncaster and Leeds / Bradford FS / Ilkley / Skipton routes. While responses have now been received from both, they cannot be considered satisfactory, as they do not commit Northern / RNP to any action other than to monitor the impacts of the changes.

TransPennine Express TPE

- 2.11 The previous Transport Committee report set out details of TPE's proposed temporary, reduced timetable, to be operated for a maximum of one year from 10 December 2023. These service patterns have now been confirmed as the ones which will be running. It is hoped that criteria will shortly be agreed for assessing the scope for certain services to be reinstated in advance of December 2024, provided that sufficient progress has been made in

addressing the underlying crew and training issues that have caused unacceptable reliability levels on TPE services.

- 2.12 The concerns set out in the previous paper, regarding TPE's proposal to withdraw the "Nova 3" trains, remain, and the Combined Authority has now formalised and reinforced this by writing to the Rail North Partnership. At the time of writing, the Combined Authority is awaiting details from TPE of the passenger demand (train loading) assumptions and train unit utilisation plans on which they base a suggestion that, from a pure capacity point of view, these trains could be dispensed with; initial broad calculations by Combined Authority officers suggest the contrary. We have also highlighted that the trains concerned are modern and of high-quality, are popular with passengers and are readily adaptable to the forthcoming electrification of the route. The next step is for the Rail North Partnership to share proposals (options) for TPE's fleet strategy, which the Rail North Committee will then have the opportunity to consider.

Passenger Network Enhancements

- 2.13 To promote demand, Northern launched a "flash sale" on the 4 September with one million 50p tickets, three million £1 tickets and one million £2 tickets available. The fares were available on bookings for travel between 11 September and 20 October. To protect capacity, Northern restricted offers around known busy flows either because they are usually busy, or because of special events operating at the time of the sale.
- 2.14 During 2023 Northern has been carrying out 'deep cleaning' at stations during RMT and ASLEF strike days. When footfall is very low Northern has taken the opportunity to work with its maintenance provider to deep clean stations and to address areas of the station where it would normally be difficult to clean with lots of people around. Stations which have been targeted in the West Yorkshire area include Cross Gates, Wakefield Kirkgate, Normanton, Garforth, Denby Dale and Horsforth. Deep cleans will continue when the opportunity presents itself.
- 2.15 To improve accessibility and help blind and partially sighted customers, TPE has installed new tactile maps at Dewsbury, Huddersfield, and Manchester Airport stations. The tactile 'Maps for All' are a unique product created and produced by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and are designed for use by all ages and abilities. Each map has been carefully designed to incorporate tactile and visual components, resulting in each map that combines layers, visual contrasts, textures, raised large print, braille, as well as tactile and visual symbols.

Rail Ticket Office Closure Consultation Exercise – Update

- 2.16 At the previous Transport Committee Meeting we shared our consultation response to the rail ticket office closure consultation which was launched on the 5 July 2023 via the national Transport Focus body. While the Combined Authority is aware that the ways in which rail travellers purchase tickets have

changed and there is a case for altering the ways in which staff presence is provided at stations, the proposals were considered to be inappropriate and potentially deeply damaging and this was reflected in the detailed response which was submitted. Transport Focus received 750,000 responses to the consultation, a significant number were objections. The main themes that emerged from the responses included ticket machine capability, accessibility and how passenger assistance and information would be delivered in future.

- 2.17 Between the consultation closing and 6 October, Transport Focus engaged with Train Operating Companies (TOCs) to see if they could secure improvements to their proposals based on reviews, with the final mitigations from TOCs due on the 6 October. Transport Focus completed its review of the extensive public feedback, together with the additional information that train operators provided to them and published on the 31 October their response to the proposals. Under the terms of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, Transport Focus is required to respond to the proposals indicating whether they will accept or reject based on criteria relating to customer service, accessibility and cost effectiveness. Transport Focus has objected to all of the current proposals to close ticket offices.
- 2.18 Transport Focus highlighted several industry-wide issues, such as the design, implementation and piloting of Welcome Points; monitoring and review mechanisms, including industry agreed queuing time targets for Ticket Vending Machines; and future regulation for material changes in station staffing, as reasons for their objections to the proposals.
- 2.19 Shortly after the announcement, the Transport Secretary, Mark Harper, withdrew their proposals. Northern, LNER and TPE have all confirmed that they will not be taking forward the proposals. The Secretary of State's decision to withdraw these proposals is welcomed.
- 2.20 Regional Mayors, including Mayor Brabin, will no longer need to pursue the legal challenge which was initiated when the consultation was launched.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 An important element of the Transport Recovery Plan agreed in 2020 is to try to embed increased levels of active travel and the opportunity to restore and grow public transport use to maintain improved air quality and achieve decarbonisation ambitions.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 Sustaining an effective, stable and affordable public transport network is crucial in ensuring the post pandemic economic recovery is inclusive particularly to communities with limited access to private transport, and in meeting the Combined Authority's inclusive growth objectives.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 Ensuring an effective, stable, and affordable public transport network is important for equality and diversity to ensure that it meets the needs of different communities across West Yorkshire. The potential rail service changes run counter to the Combined Authority's equality and diversity objectives.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 That the Committee notes the updates provided in this report.

11. Background Documents

- 11.1 None

12. Appendices

APPENDIX 1 – Rail Network Performance Data