

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 1 August 2019

Subject: **Blake Jones Rail Review**

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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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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:	N/A

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the West Yorkshire Combined Authority with an update on the rail reviews.

2. Information

The Blake Jones Review of the Rail North Partnership

- 2.1 The introduction of the May 2018 rail timetable changes in the North led to severe disruption for passengers and businesses. Cllr Blake on behalf of TfN and the Minister for Rail at the Department for Transport (DfT) undertook a joint TfN/DfT Review into the issues, "The Blake Jones Review of the Rail North Partnership". A small review team was established consisting of officials from TfN, DfT and West Yorkshire Combined Authority and views were obtained from Local Transport Authorities in the North, LEPs, Transport Focus, train operators, TfN, DfT and the Rail North Partnership.
- 2.2 The Review was published on 19 July 2019, the summary document to the review is attached as Appendix 1. The Review identifies five recommendations

for immediate implementation and a further four recommendations for longer term implementation, and which are made to inform the William Review.

- 2.3 The five recommendations for immediate implementation can be taken forward without making changes to the governing agreement between DfT and TfN for the co-management of the Northern and TransPennine Express Franchises (the Partnership Agreement), and similarly do not require changes to the existing Northern or TransPennine Express Franchise Agreements. The five recommendations are set out below:

Recommendation 1

Work with Train Operating Companies (TOCs) on a new 'Passenger Promise' to ensure passengers are the central focus of decisions by the rail industry and the Rail North Partnership. It will set out the standards and behaviours passengers can expect. This will include:

- a) Developing new proposals for improved passenger information, to ensure communication is effective particularly during periods of disruption.
- b) Giving passengers a stronger voice, by promoting and expanding opportunities for passengers to engage with decisions about their local services.
- c) A new collaboration between the Rail North Partnership and Transport Focus,
- d) as well as stronger links with businesses in the region, to seek out opportunities to consider the passenger perspective in decisions made by the Partnership and get better information on passenger perspectives to shape future plans.
- e) A regular sector-wide snapshot of performance and passenger experience enhancing existing reporting arrangements to ensure impact is fully understood. This approach will bring together local intelligence, operational performance information, passenger feedback, and infrastructure updates, to consider future impacts on passengers, rather than merely reporting historic operations, with suitable early warning systems for foreseen problems.

Recommendation 2

A package of measures to provide greater political oversight of the decision-making process within the RNP. This will ensure there is a 'golden thread' between political decision making, implementation by officers, and outcomes for passengers. This will include:

- a) Empowering political leaders to be responsible and accountable for strategic decisions that impact on services to passengers in the North, enabled by a new formal scheme of delegations to set out how and where key decisions are made.
- b) A revised Terms of Reference for the Rail North Committee, setting out how meetings will operate, its role and remit reflecting the new scheme of delegations, and highlighting the ability to escalate matters within Transport for the North's governance in order to engage directly with Ministers for the Department for Transport.

- c) Direct reporting of the Rail North Partnership Board Members who represent TfN to the Rail North Committee, along with an explicit role for the Rail North Committee Chair to give direction on behalf of Northern leaders to those Board Members on urgent matters arising between meetings of the Committee.
- d) An annual review of the Rail North Partnership arrangements jointly held by the Secretary of State, or relevant minister, and Northern Leaders to establish a forward look of the major risks, challenges, and priorities of the year ahead, alongside use of provisions within the Partnership Agreement to have more frequent reviews if required.
- e) Agreement of a new MoU between the DfT, TfN on behalf of Northern authorities, and Network Rail, to set out appropriate governance arrangements that are consistent with the ORR Inquiry and will deepen collaboration, aid coordinated decision-making, and ensure that there is appropriate input from the North into all rail issues.

Recommendation 3

Establishment of an Information Protocol with a presumption of maximum transparency while respecting legal and commercial constraints and respective accountabilities of the parties where necessary, including:

- a) Access to all appropriate information needed for decision-making in line with the new scheme of delegations as per Recommendation 2, formalising the arrangement whereby reports, options and analyses are made available to DfT and TfN jointly and in parallel by default.
- b) A review of confidentiality provisions to ensure as much information as possible is available to decision-makers consistent with the legal obligations in the Franchise Agreements and the DfT's other obligations.
- c) A strengthened audit trail and greater public visibility regarding decisions made by the Partnership.

Recommendation 4

Development of an Integrated Forward Plan for the RNP, reflecting the Passenger Promise and new scheme of delegations by establishing a collaborative work programme for the Partnership that brings together its delivery milestones and decision points joined up with the wider rail industry, covering:

- a) A jointly developed Communications Protocol covering the Partnership, the TOCs and other industry players, to ensure greater accountability of TOCs to passengers through communication to them that is clear, honest and insightful.
- b) This Communication Protocol will reflect the obligations on the TOCs to meaningfully engage on changes that impact on passengers, including to the detailed timetable and the Train Service Requirement.
- c) Progress against agreed benchmarks for passenger-facing measures in the Franchise Agreements, and the delivery of relevant elements of TfN's Strategic Transport Plan.
- d) A clear read-across with TOCs' annual business plans.

- e) A clear read-across to Network Rail's annual business plan. Additionally, a proposal for Network Rail to provide a regular dashboard that brings together progress on infrastructure and operational issues where relevant to RNP decisions. This mirrors the dashboard Highways England provides to the TfN Board.
- f) The annual review between the Secretary of State, or relevant minister, and Northern Leaders discussed above.

Recommendation 5

Enhanced resourcing, in terms of both adequate levels and effective use, of the Rail North Partnership, specifically:

- a) Additional resources for the RNP Team and TfN Strategic Rail Team, recognising that as well as using and coordinating existing resources more effectively, there may be a need for an increase to deliver these recommendations. The DfT and TfN are committed to working together to provide this resource and will establish how this could be funded, considering existing contributions from the DfT, TfN, support from TfN's constituent authorities and the availability of future funding.
- b) To further support the use and management of existing resources, a member officer code of conduct for the Rail North Partnership and improved communications regarding the role of Rail North Partnership officers will be developed.

- 2.4 In addition there are recommendations that rely on more fundamental change in the longer-term, which is the topic of the ongoing William Review. The Blake Jones Review of the Rail North Partnership has therefore made four further recommendations for consideration by the Williams Review as follows:

Recommendation 6

Whether, and how, a more effective 'guiding mind' for rail services in the North that considers system-wide risks and issues can be put in place, and the extent to which devolved bodies could have a greater role in this.

Recommendation 7

Whether and how there can be a more explicit, integrated focus on the North by Network Rail together with greater accountability to TfN as part of this.

Recommendation 8

Whether and how future rail services can be integrated across track and train (including how Network Rail and others will strengthen alignment between future service delivery and infrastructure availability) and aligned with the North's aspirations, as set out in Strategic Transport Plan produced by Transport for the North.

Recommendation 9

Whether and how further devolution of rail responsibilities to the North will operate within any emerging overall rail industry structure.

- 2.5 The Transport for the North Board considered an Action Plan to deliver the recommendations of the Blake Jones Review at its meeting on 31 July 2019. A verbal update will be provided on this at the meeting.

Williams Rail Review

- 2.6 Keith Williams, independent Chair of the Government's Rail Review, provided an update at a Northern Powerhouse Partnership event on 16 July 2019 in Bradford. A full transcript of his speech is included as Appendix B.
- 2.7 He outlined five key elements of the "core passenger offer"- Reliability and Punctuality, Safety and Security, Value for Money, Consistency and Transparency, Accessibility. The key elements of the review recommendations are expected to be;
- a new passenger offer;
 - simplified fares and ticketing;
 - a new industry structure; and
 - a new commercial model
- 2.8 Williams has identified the importance of regional accountability for strategic decisions on rail which have a strategic economic significance. This will support further devolution to a regional level.

3. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 3.1 There are no inclusive growth implications directly arising from this report. An important objective of the Combined Authority's contribution to the rail reviews has been to ensure that rail performs a role as part of the transport mix that maximises its contribution to our inclusive growth ambitions.

4. Financial Implications

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

5. Legal Implications

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

6. Staffing Implications

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

7. External Consultees

- 7.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the Combined Authority endorses the outcome of the Blake Jones Review.
- 8.2 That the Combined Authority notes the update on the Williams Review.

9. Background Documents

- 9.1 None

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Rail North Partnership Summary Report

Appendix 2 – Transcript of Keith Williams speech updating on the Government Rail Review