

Report to: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Date: 25 April 2019

Subject: Rail Issues

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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:	

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To brief the Combined Authority on the latest position on main rail issues. Anna-Jane Hunter, Director, North of England Rail for Network Rail will be in attendance.

2 Information

Main issues

- 2.1 The current main issues affecting rail services in the City Region are:
- Whilst service performance has improved since summer / autumn 2018, passengers are still affected by daily variability in services and overcrowding of peak services remains a significant issue.
 - Service changes planned in May 2019 will deliver some of the delayed service enhancements planned in the franchises. As reported elsewhere, there is uncertainty about the degree to which all service commitments can be realised reliably on the existing rail network.
 - It is increasingly clear from work being undertaken by Richard George and Network Rail that the rail network in and around Leeds is a network-wide

constraint that impacts on reliability and the ability run more and longer trains across West Yorkshire and beyond. It is important that Network Rail's analytical work is well-resourced and reports in a timely way.

- A formal announcement on the TransPennine Route Upgrade is still awaited.

Recovery from May 2018 timetable change

- 2.2 Whilst service performance has significantly improved since last year, it has not fully recovered to the levels achieved before. However this varies on a day to day basis and it is clear that a busier railway will recover from incidents more slowly than previously.
- 2.3 Richard George was appointed by the Department for Transport in summer 2018 to work with Transport for the North (TfN) and across rail industry bodies with a focus on restoring reliability to the North's rail network. Richard is an independent railway expert and not aligned to any of the train operating companies, their owning groups, Network Rail, the Department for Transport, or Transport for the North.
- 2.4 Since his appointment, Richard has been working with the industry to develop a comprehensive understanding of the way the network has been performing, the operational difficulties it has been facing, and associated governance and decision-making processes. Richard presented an update to the public session of the TfN Board on 7 February 2019 (see 'Background Documents'). In summary, he identified the following issues:
- The railway in the North of England is now busier than it has been for decades; it requires much greater operating discipline to run reliably. This will require a different approach to railway operations with greater co-ordination between different parts of the railway where operations are critical.
 - There are significant capacity issues around the network, and these will become worse as more services are introduced.
 - Some of the industry structures and governance arrangements are not helping. The industry is inter-connected, and this becomes increasingly evident as the network becomes busier.
 - There are no 'quick fixes' – many of the identified issues will require long term effort.
 - There are operational risks to be addressed in the introduction of new trains into the network over the coming years.
- 2.5 The recommendations from Richard and his team, which the industry has accepted, include:
- Planning no additional trains on already congested corridors – the Castlefield corridor in central Manchester, and also between Leeds and York until work is undertaken to create more capacity.

- A more systematic approach to planning for timetable changes, including performance modelling and decision making processes. Also to include much earlier planning at key locations, such as Leeds station workings.
 - A programme of training to improve train dispatch (getting trains away on time) across many key stations, and a 'one team' approach across different railway bodies responsible for day to day operations at Manchester Piccadilly.
 - The development of robust contingency plans for introducing new trains.
 - The need for a plan for depot and stabling investment.
- 2.6 The recent focus has been on ensuring that the May 2019 timetable change takes place seamlessly. Further changes to the timetable structure from May 2019 are focused on building-in resilience; this (generally) needs more trains to run the same level of service.
- 2.7 The next stage of work is to establish a clear position about when all outstanding service commitments initially due in December 2019 will be met, together with what work to the network will be required to enable this. The headline findings should be available in May 2019.
- 2.8 Many of the issues raised by Richard George (particularly structural and governance) are the subject of the Rail North Partnership Review (Blake / Jones), and also wider national Williams Review. The re-structuring of Network Rail is also a response to some of the issues identified.
- 2.9 Richard George has been invited to attend the Combined Authority meeting in June 2019, when he should be in position to explain the main outcomes of this work.

Rail infrastructure matters

- 2.10 A clear message from the Richard George work and elsewhere is that the rail network cannot reliably accommodate the full range of service commitments made across the various franchises. This impacts proposals both for additional services and for operating longer trains.
- 2.11 A programme of platform extensions has been underway across the network in anticipation of longer trains. This work is ongoing, but is well advanced. Significant improvements were also delivered on the Calder Valley line in 2018 to improve capacity, reliability and ultimately to speed up journeys. These projects were reported to Transport Committee on 9 November 2018.
- 2.12 Other infrastructure work is underway, but running late. The main example of this locally is the work to create a new Platform 0 at Leeds station, together with changes to Platforms 1 to 6 to accommodate more frequent and longer trains. As widely reported in late March, this work is necessary to allow longer 6-car trains to operate on the lines to Skipton and Ilkley, impacts on the ability to run more trains on the line to Harrogate, and is also an important part of LNER's proposal to run additional services through to Bradford Forster Square

and Harrogate. This project was initially due to be complete for December 2019, but it is now expected to be ready for the December 2021 timetable.

- 2.13 Leeds station and the network around central Leeds is crucial to the effective operation of services across the City Region, since almost all trains run to and from or through Leeds. As confirmed by the initial Richard George analysis, the effective operation of the network in and around Leeds, together with central Manchester, is crucial to the effective operation of the network across the North.
- 2.14 It is becoming increasingly clear that Leeds station and its associated network is one of the main local constraints to running more frequent and longer trains across the City Region. For example, the full benefit of the significant works completed on the Calder Valley line in 2018 cannot be fully realised unless network constraints in and around Leeds (and central Manchester) are addressed.
- 2.15 The benefit of platform extensions at Woodlesford and stations in the Five Towns area can only be fully realised if Platform 17 at Leeds station is lengthened. At present it can only accommodate two trains if they are both of two carriages maximum. Failure to extend Platform 17 (or otherwise address this problem) will constrain the ability to increase capacity on the lines to Castleford, Pontefract and Barnsley and beyond and wider on the City Region network. Together with the Calder Valley line constraints highlighted above, these are examples of why addressing network capacity and capability in and around Leeds station has a wide-ranging impact across the City Region.
- 2.16 Together with the ongoing work being led by Richard George, Network Rail is now also leading packages of work to understand the implications of the network constraints in and around Leeds station which are a barrier to service improvements. Combined Authority officers are participating in this work. The focus is on what network infrastructure work is necessary to reliably deliver the existing service commitments in the short term, through to developing a clear strategy in the medium to longer term to accommodate ongoing growth on City Region rail services in the context of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail proposals. It is important that this work is well-resourced to secure clarity as soon as possible what the short and long term investment plans need to include.
- 2.17 Other than the Platforms 0 to 6 project currently underway and set out above, there are no other funded enhancement projects to address network capacity and capability in and around Leeds station. Any projects that are identified as required by the analytical work currently underway will need to be promoted through the new Rail Network Enhancements Programme (RNEP) process for funding.
- 2.18 The current RNEP funding programme for Control Period 6 (2019 to 2024) is understood to be over-subscribed, although DfT has not published details. It is therefore important to ensure that this investment is recognised as a high

priority across the City Region and through the TfN Investment Programme process.

- 2.19 Together with unlocking network capacity in central Manchester, addressing network capacity in and around Leeds is a crucial component for delivering almost all potential service improvements across the City Region in terms of running more or longer trains.

TransPennine Route Upgrade

- 2.20 At the time of writing, a formal announcement on TransPennine Route upgrade is awaited. An announcement was initially expected around the turn of the year. Government has reiterated it is committed to spending £2.9 billion on the TransPennine Route Upgrade, which forms part of the commitments from the RNEP from 2019 to 2024.
- 2.21 A detailed update on TransPennine Route Upgrade was provided at Transport Committee on 15 March 2019, and Combined Authority officers continue to work in close liaison with officers from Kirklees Council and Leeds City Council together with Network Rail to influence detailed design and implementation matters.

Timetable changes in 2019

- 2.22 The next timetable change is on 19 May 2019. This will result in further service changes. These are a combination of changes to secure further improvements to reliability, together with some additional services initially anticipated from December 2017.
- 2.23 The May changes were reported in detail to Transport Committee at its meeting on 15 March 2019. Highlights include a third train per hour between Harrogate and Leeds, reconnecting the Blackpool to York services, extension of an hourly Leeds to Manchester Victoria train (via Bradford and Halifax) to Warrington and Chester, and extension of the hourly Huddersfield to Wakefield Kirkgate service through to Castleford on Mondays to Saturdays.
- 2.24 Improved frequencies will also be introduced on Sundays on local services between Leeds and Selby, Doncaster and Sheffield (via Moorthorpe).
- 2.25 Combined Authority officers continue to work with Transport for the North officers, and operators directly on ensuring that detailed timetable points are addressed. However, there remain a number of outstanding commitments.
- 2.26 Officers continue to work closely with TfN and rail operators to ensure specific local issues can be addressed where possible through the cycle of timetable changes. Amongst others, particular issues include the structure of the timetable on the Calder Valley line to provide a more even spread of services in each hour, and ensuring better peak-hour services at Slaithwaite and Marsden to provide better connectivity into Manchester, Huddersfield and

Leeds. There are good indications that improvements in these circumstances can be achieved from December 2019.

- 2.27 Confirmation of timetable changes by Northern and TransPennine Express for December 2019 are awaited, with more information expected in May once network analysis and industry decision-making processes are complete. The availability of new trains is also a factor to be considered.
- 2.28 May 2019 was intended to be the timetable change where Leeds – London services were extended to and from Bradford Forster Square every two hours, to and from Harrogate every two-hours and once daily to and from Huddersfield and Dewsbury.
- 2.29 LNER has confirmed that it now plans to extend Leeds – London services to and from Harrogate every two-hours from December 2019. It remains committed to the Bradford Forster Square and Huddersfield service improvements and is currently expecting to deliver these in 2020. This is reliant on getting all of its new trains into service (the first of these new trains is expected into service from 15 May 2019), and on addressing timetabling and capacity constraints.

The Rail North Partnership Review (“Blake Jones”) Review

- 2.30 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 Rail North Partnership Review”. 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.
- 2.31 It is anticipated that the review will be published in May 2019.

3. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 3.1 There are no inclusive growth implications directly arising from this report.

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 The report has been prepared with information provided by Transport for the North and the rail industry.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the Combined Authority notes the current issues affecting the delivery of rail services in the City Region.
- 8.2 That the Combined Authority urges DfT and Network Rail to prioritise the technical capacity analysis needed to determine the rail network requirements in and around central Leeds necessary to bring clarity on the investment required to deliver committed service improvements and accommodate growth across the City Region.
- 8.4 In response to the importance of addressing rail network capacity in and around central Leeds for improved services across the Leeds City Region and beyond, that the Combined Authority endorses the need for ongoing activity to make a strong case for investment by:
- working with Transport for the North to ensure that the strategies and investment plans it is developing reflect this important priority;
 - continuing to shape and influence plans for TransPennine Route Upgrade, HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail to ensure that these respond to the need to facilitate rail service growth and improvements across all parts of the City Region; and
 - alongside Council partners, continuing to make a strong and compelling pitch to central government for the Rail Network Enhancement Programme funding that will be required to unlock network capacity in the City Region.

9. Background Documents

Details of Calder Valley line upgrade work and West Yorkshire platform lengthening programme. **Item 17** - West Yorkshire Transport Committee, 9 November 2018. Available via: <http://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk>

Richard George Update report. **Appendix 1** to Item 9 – Transport for the North Board meeting, 7 February 2019. Available via: www.transportfornorth.com/meetings

Detailed report on May 2019 timetable changes, report of Richard George commission and findings and update on TransPennine Route Upgrade activity. **Item 11** – West Yorkshire Transport Committee, 15 March 2019. Available via: <http://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk>

10. Appendices

None.