

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 10 January 2020

Subject: Rail matters

Director: Alan Reiss, Director of Policy, Strategy and Communications

Author(s): Richard Crabtree

| | |
|---|---|
| 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: | |

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1. To provide an update on rail network capacity matters and seek approval to the Combined Authority's ongoing position and priorities for responding to and influencing the need for increased capacity.
- 1.2. To provide an update on matters relating to the East Coast Mainline, and to seek approval for the Combined Authority's ongoing membership and support of the Consortium of East Coast Mainline Authorities (ECMA).
- 1.3. To provide an update on the position regarding continued operation of Pacer trains in West Yorkshire.

2. Information

Rail network capacity in West Yorkshire

- 2.1. The ability of the rail network to continue accommodating growth remains an important concern. The December 2019 timetable change was meant to mark the final significant implementation of franchise commitments by Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE) to run more frequent and longer trains across West Yorkshire and beyond. LNER also inherited commitments for additional frequency and capacity from the former Virgin Trains East Coast franchise.

- 2.2. In the event, it has not been possible to realise all the commitments for extra passenger capacity, mainly as a result of insufficient network capacity for either longer or more frequent trains. There are high-profile instances of services that have not been delivered, as reported to Transport Committee on 6 September 2019, some of which delivered extra passenger capacity where they were part of more frequent service patterns.
- 2.3. A high-level summary of where extra capacity expectations has not yet been met is provided at **Appendix 1**. This shows, line by line, where originally intended extra capacity was expected to be delivered, and what is now being delivered. The City Region faces the challenge that on many routes it is currently not possible to run either more frequent or longer trains in response to the need for increased capacity.
- 2.4. Where it has been possible, TPE, Northern and LNER have introduced extra capacity, and this is clearly very welcome. Within the coming months, when all new trains have entered service, there will be significant extra capacity on some lines. However, the expectation is that this will quickly be taken-up, and there is a need to continue to develop clear plans to accommodate growth in the next ten years.
- 2.5. Lack of capacity is primarily a concern for peak periods. Main constraints at present are:
- **Leeds station and approaches.** This is major constraint for services across West Yorkshire and beyond. Platform lengths and configuration at Leeds station are preventing the operation of longer trains. The layout of the network on approaches from both the west and east makes running more frequent trains difficult. This is now an urgent issue. Priority is accommodating longer trains on services into and out of Leeds via Woodlesford, which currently rely on Platform 17. These trains operate on services to and from Castleford, Wakefield Kirkgate, Barnsley and Sheffield, Nottingham / Lincoln and are currently limited to 2-cars only.
 - **Platform lengths around West Yorkshire.** A significant programme of platform extensions has been underway over the last two years, as detailed to Transport Committee on 9 November 2018. It is evident that further platform extensions will be required to accommodate longer trains on various routes. Notably, 6-car trains are due to be introduced on Leeds to Shipley, Keighley, Skipton / Ilkley services from December 2021 whose full benefit will not be realised without platform extensions at the stations where trains are busiest.
 - **Depots and stabling.** This has arisen as an important constraint. As operators are now running more and longer trains the limits of depot and stabling facilities across the region are being reached. This has led to operational difficulties for Northern in particular. It is crucial that the industry develops a coherent plan to address this quickly. Priority is to

ease pressure on the Neville Hill depot in Leeds to improve reliability and create capacity for growth.

- **Central Manchester and other network nodes.** These constraints prevent the running of more frequent trains and in turn capacity. Central Manchester capacity now constrains train frequencies on the Calder Valley line. Significant constraints now also apply at York, Doncaster and Sheffield. The stretch of line east of Leeds towards York is also a pinch point, requiring significant compromises to be made on stopping patterns that impact service levels at local stations.

2.6. As noted at Transport Committee on 10 May 2019, there are several initiatives to identify network capacity issues and how these should be dealt with, including:

- Leeds Station and Approaches Continuous Modular Strategic Planning (CMSP) exercise being undertaken by Network Rail. This is expected to conclude later in 2020 with suggested schemes for business case development. Combined Authority officers actively participate in the working group for this work and have influenced the growth forecasts using local evidence.
- The 'Leeds Problem Statement' exercise is being co-ordinated by DfT. This has involved a series of workshops to address what responses to network challenges around Leeds might look like.
- Depots and Stabling CMSP covering the Eastern Region of Network Rail. This is in its early stages and will be used to identify future depot and stabling requirements in the context of a growing railway.
- Leeds Station Franchise Infrastructure Plan report undertaken by Network Rail on behalf of DfT. This work has confirmed the nature of immediate constraints on the rail network at Leeds, including platform lengths at Leeds station.

2.7. The fragmentation of responsibilities in the current structure of the railway is a recognised problem. The Combined Authority's response to the Williams Review emphasised the need for a 'guiding mind' to bring leadership and accountability to the operation and planning of the railway. The absence of overall ownership and therefore leadership for coherently planning and growing the West Yorkshire rail network is a symptom of this problem. The Combined Authority is working in partnership with all the relevant parties to positively influence these plans with local knowledge and evidence.

2.8. As well as participating in the work set out above where officers have been invited, the Combined Authority is also assembling its own evidence base to influence the need to accommodate growth. This includes building a comprehensive evidence base on changing patterns of rail use, cross-referencing with forecasts in the Regional Econometric Model, and commissioning network capacity analysis to inform priorities.

- 2.9. It has become clear that the existing Northern franchise is unlikely to continue in its current form. During an appearance at the Transport Select Committee on 16 October 2019, the Secretary of State for Transport made clear the Department for Transport had invited proposals from Arriva and the Operator of Last Resort for running the Northern operation. The implication is that a new contractual baseline will apply from some point in 2020. An official announcement is expected shortly and details will be reported to Transport Committee when known. In any event there will likely be a need to consider priorities for new services and additional capacity on local services sooner than was anticipated had the franchise run its anticipated term to 2025. The evidence highlighted above will help inform these priorities.
- 2.10. There are also specific projects in development. In the short-term, this includes the TransPennine Rail Upgrade. In the longer term, this includes HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. The Combined Authority continues to press the need for these projects to be developed in the context of and to contribute to realising a wider plan for accommodating growth particularly at Leeds station and its approaches. HS2 and the new-build elements of Northern Powerhouse Rail are important ways in which extra network capacity will be delivered in the longer term.
- 2.11. Network Rail's new structure is intended to foster much greater integration and local leadership and accountability. West Yorkshire is in the new 'North & East' route, which is a component of the new Eastern Region. Rob McIntosh is the Managing Director of the Eastern Region, and Matt Rice was recently appointed as the route director for North & East. The Chair is due to meet with Mr Rice in January to highlight the Combined Authority's priorities on capacity and reliability. The need to develop and implement clear plans for a growing railway in West Yorkshire will be an important part of that discussion.

East Coast Mainline

- 2.12. The East Coast Mainline (ECML) is an important part of the rail network serving West Yorkshire, linking West Yorkshire to London and the East Midlands via Doncaster as well as connections to the North East and Scotland via York. LNER provided an update on its plans to the Transport Committee at its meeting on 6 September 2019.
- 2.13. LNER is operated by a private limited company ultimately owned by the Secretary of State for Transport under Operator of Last Resort provisions. When announced in 2018 this arrangement was expected to last until 2020. However, DfT extended the arrangements with LNER in 2019, which will allow the operation to continue until 2025 if necessary. The future operation of LNER is now likely to be determined as part of the Williams Rail Review implementation.
- 2.14. The new Azuma fleet has been introduced in greater numbers. In response to passenger feedback, LNER is modifying cycle storage, adding extra luggage space and reducing the brightness of interior lighting on these trains.

- 2.15. Since December 2019 six LNER trains per day have extended to and from Harrogate, as an extension of existing London – Leeds services. It is not currently possible for all of these to serve Horsforth as initially planned. Once LNER's fleet transition is complete, two morning southbound trains will stop at Horsforth, and two late afternoon / evening northbound services will call. These will be in place by May. All LNER services to and from Harrogate will call at Horsforth once trackwork is complete at Harrogate station to improve operational flexibility. This is expected to be complete in 2021.
- 2.16. LNER remains committed to running additional services to and from Bradford Forster Square and Shipley by extending more London – Leeds trains and expects to be able to run some additional through services from May. The full commitment of six through-services per day each way cannot be delivered with the current timetable structure and is constrained by network capacity until the current Platform 0 project at Leeds is complete. That project and a restructured timetable will come into operation from December 2021. The need to extend Platform 3 at Bradford Foster Square to accommodate these planned services whilst maintaining the reliability of Northern's local services is also becoming apparent, and the industry is working through these issues.
- 2.17. There is an outstanding commitment to one through-service from Huddersfield and Dewsbury to London via Leeds in a morning, and one return service in an evening. LNER expects to introduce this service later in 2020 once all its new trains are in reliable service.
- 2.18. A major recast of timetables on the ECML is expected in December 2021. Industry consultation on the structure of the new timetable is expected to be published shortly. The Combined Authority response will be prepared for sign-off by Transport Committee members at the next meeting.
- 2.19. In September 2019 Government published Allan Cook's (Chair of HS2 Ltd) stocktake on the HS2 project. This identified that the likely opening date of Phase 2b of HS2 is now likely to be in the range 2035 to 2040. This means that the ECML will remain the basis of West Yorkshire's primary rail link with London until at least the mid-2030s. At the time of writing, the outcome of the Oakervee Review of HS2 is still awaited. Subject to the outcome, the ECML's long-term role for West Yorkshire could be significantly different to current assumptions.
- 2.20. The Consortium of East Coast Mainline Authorities (ECMA) commissioned research into the economic impact of potential further investment in the route, which is also an important part of plans for HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail. The research was completed in 2019 and includes an analysis of the economic impact of disruption on the line. Subject to the outcome of the Oakervee Review, the research will be published and launched later in 2020. Meanwhile it has been used to help make the case to Government for additional investment into the resilience of the line, which is particularly prone to events that severely disrupt services. This generated significant coverage

in autumn 2019 and will be used to support advocacy work with the new Government in the first months of 2020.

- 2.21. The factors above underline the importance of keeping investment in the ECML high on the agenda. An important way the Combined Authority does this is through membership and support for ECMA. The Combined Authority contributes to ECMA's budget and supports the Consortium with policy and communications officer time. The recommendations of this report include rolling forward the existing commitment for financial year 2020/21.

Continued use of Pacer trains

- 2.22. As reported to Transport Committee at its meeting on 6 September 2019, Pacer trains will continue to operate on the rail network in West and South Yorkshire into 2020. This is contrary to high-profile promises made by the Government when the Northern franchise was let in 2015, and commitments subsequently made by Northern. The primary reason for the delay is late delivery of new trains.
- 2.23. The first Pacer trains were taken out of daily service in August 2019. Around the timetable change in mid-December substantial numbers of Pacer trains were withdrawn from service, and Pacer trains are now being actively scrapped. However, it has been necessary for Northern to modify its plans for continued use of Pacers compared to the information previously reported.
- 2.24. During the first couple of months of 2020, Pacers will remain in service more widely than originally anticipated, including on local stopping services on the Leeds – Castleford – Wakefield Kirkgate – Barnsley – Sheffield services. Pacers should then be limited to the services previously highlighted through to early summer. Pacer numbers are already declining as new trains are introduced, and numbers will continue to dwindle until Pacers are eliminated from services by summer 2020.
- 2.25. Pacers trains fail to meet passenger expectations, and their continued use remains unwelcome. However, the reprofiling of their withdrawal is the result of revisiting new train introduction plans to help reduce the disruption that introducing new trains is causing. It is clearly better for passengers for services to be as reliable as possible in the first instance.
- 2.26. Discussions with Northern continue in partnership with South Yorkshire Transport Executive to secure some benefit for the continued use of these trains. Options are constrained by the likely early termination of the Northern franchise, as set out at paragraph 2.9 above.

Continued use of trains not meeting accessibility regulations

- 2.27. The Pacer trains, together with some other trains in Northern's fleet will not fully comply with rail vehicle accessibility regulations that came into force on 1 January 2020. This is due to late delivery of new trains, and delays to the programme of modifications to existing trains that will remain in service. Other

operators serving West Yorkshire have compliant fleets, except for the very small number of services between Leeds and London St Pancras operated by East Midlands Railway.

- 2.28. The Department for Transport has issued temporary dispensations to Northern and other rail operators to accommodate this. Northern has put together a package of measures to mitigate the non-compliance as part of securing the dispensation from the Department. The temporary dispensations expire at various points throughout 2020. Once the Pacer trains are withdrawn (see above), a very small and diminishing number of not compliant trains may operate in West Yorkshire until the programme of upgrades is complete.
- 2.29. The train fleet serving West Yorkshire will soon therefore fully comply with accessibility regulations. The emphasis then falls to ensuring all stations meet accessibility guidelines. The Chair wrote to the Secretary of State for Transport in September 2019 highlighting the ongoing need for funding to support the aim of ensuring all West Yorkshire's stations are fully compliant as soon as possible.

3. Clean Growth Implications

- 3.1. Championing growth on the local rail network is an important way in which the Combined Authority can facilitate modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport and support continued economic growth.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. The recommendations include rolling forwards the existing contribution of £10,000 per annum to the Consortium of East Coast Mainline Authorities. The recommendation is for up to £10,000 for 2020/21 – the ask of member authorities is not yet known.

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. Officer support from within the Policy, Strategy and Communications Directorate to ECMA activity is an existing commitment.

7. External Consultees

- 7.1. None.

8. Recommendations

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

- 8.2. That the Committee endorses the continued need for the Combined Authority to champion investment to unlock rail network capacity to operate longer and more frequent trains throughout West Yorkshire through ongoing engagement with DfT, Network Rail, TfN and rail operators.
- 8.3. That the Committee agrees the need to make a strong and compelling case to DfT alongside the rail industry to fund as a matter of urgency interventions being identified to allow longer trains to operate into and out of Leeds to and from Castleford / Wakefield / Barnsley via Woodlesford that currently rely on Platform 17.
- 8.4. That the Committee agrees to the ongoing membership of the Consortium of East Coast Mainline Authorities for the 2020/21 financial year, with a financial contribution of up to £10,000.
- 8.5. That the Committee agrees to ongoing transport policy and communication officer time to support the work of ECMA.

9. Background Documents

- 9.1. None

10. Appendices

Appendix 1 Summary of capacity commitments by line and current status.