

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 14 May 2021

Subject: **Covid-19 Update**

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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 current impacts of COVID on transport and on the actions set out in the Transport Recovery Plan that was endorsed at the Combined Authority in July 2020.

2. Information

Travel Advice

- 2.1 On 22 February, Government set out an indicative “roadmap” of which the key implications for travel advice are;
- **Step 1 - 8/29 March** – The “Stay at home” message was replaced by “Minimise Travel” on 29 March.
 - **Step 2 - 12 April** Non-essential retail returned but “Minimise Travel and still work from home if you can” message remains.

- **Step 3 - 17 May** Indoor hospitality and entertainment returns. “Minimise travel” advice lifted but “work from home if you can” remains.
- **Step 4 - 21 June** Remove all legal limits on social contact, travel advice and remaining premises reopen.
- The Government’s review of social distancing is separate to the roadmap and will consider the capacity constraints on public transport and other precautions such as face coverings.

Supporting our Bus Passengers

- 2.2 Ridership on buses has increased since the resumption of schools and the re-opening of non-essential retail. At the time of writing, bus use was at around 60% of that which could be expected in April. Service levels were restored to 100% of pre pandemic rates from 11 April. Enhanced cleaning and sanitisation continues to be deployed on buses and at bus stations. Face covering compliance in bus stations is around 90%.
- 2.3 Around 5% of trips involve situations where buses are full to their constrained safe capacity leading to bus passengers unable to board. Bus operators and the Combined Authority are working closely to ensure all available capacity is targeted at the busy times. Real time information screens and apps advise customers as to how full an approaching bus is. Data from ticket machines is being used to identify the busy times and target duplicate buses where available.
- 2.4 School and college buses resumed on 8 March with the additional capacity funded by the Department for Education. This provision is now expected to operate until the end of the academic year in July. The deployment of additional buses and coaches to school services limits the availability of buses to meet the overall increase in demand.
- 2.5 Bus service punctuality improved significantly during the “lockdown” period of lower traffic levels. Between January and March 2021 92% of buses were on time at a point along their journey and 95% started their journey on time. Punctuality at intermediate points on the journey was notably higher than the same period in previous years (2109 84%, 2020 82%). Since step 2 of the roadmap on 12 April, road traffic levels have increased to 85% of normal with a corresponding impact on bus punctuality.

Supporting our Rail Passengers

- 2.6 The national lifting of COVID-19 restrictions has made demand more unpredictable, and operators have had to become more reactive; providing additional bus replacement as a back up to rail replacement, strengthening where possible and providing additional staff at managed stations to assist customers and to feedback on problem areas. Staff resource availability continues to be a key challenge which is impacting on the number of services which can be reintroduced without impacting adversely on performance. West

Yorkshire Combined Authority will work closely with both Operators and Transport for the North to ensure those services unable to be introduced are put in place as soon as it is operationally practicable to do so.

- 2.7 The timetable continues to operate reliably with performance improving since the last period reported to committee. PPM (Passenger Performance Measure) for Northern and TPE remains above 90%. CASL (Cancellations and Significant Lateness) for both operators has decreased with Northern at 0.9% and TPE at 1.2%. Trespass on the railway is one of the areas which has shown an increase during the period impacting on delays.
- 2.8 One area of concern for Northern regarding their new electric (Class 331) and diesel fleet (Class 195) is a fault which has been discovered in a yaw damper bracket. A yaw damper is a large shock absorber which connects the wheels to the train body. The fleet have been inspected and 30 trains have been temporarily withdrawn from service and a modification has been developed which is expected to take several months to fit, a specific timescale will be made available shortly. No faults have been found in the remainder of the fleet, but this will be investigated further. Northern have advised that the removal of the 30 trains will not adversely affect the current timetable because of its reduced nature but for the May timetable there will be a bus replacement for the through services Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford. Also, additional peak services Knaresborough - Leeds will not operate but Northern have advised that it is considered the remaining peak provision will accommodate the suppressed passenger demand so bus replacement will not be required. This reduction of the services in the May timetable is expected to last for a short period only. The existing fleet will need to cover for the removed trains so potentially there is an enhanced risk of overstressing the remaining fleet or trains running with less than planned carriages, this will be monitored. TPE have also carried out precautionary checks on their Nova 2 trains (that operate on the West Coast Main Line) as they were built by the same manufacturer. Fortunately, those checks were completed, and no faults were found.
- 2.9 Predictably there has been an increase in patronage as COVID-19 restrictions have eased, with Northern at approx. 30% of pre COVID-19 levels and 21% for TransPennine Express. The main increase has been retail travel including retail workers into main centres. There has been a higher-than-expected level of commuters. Leisure travel has also been prevalent particularly when the weather has been good. The Combined Authority continue to offer support with standby buses to facilitate social distancing at locations where high volumes of school children are being experienced. Passenger flows are also monitored at Leeds station and for the week ending 18 April 2021 levels were 39% of levels of the same week in 2019 (most recent comparable year pre COVID) but had increased 74.24% on the previous week. The latest available patronage data is included at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.10 The train service changes expected to take place on 17 May 2021 were reported to the March Committee meeting. With the gradual easing since March of travel restrictions, these changes are expected to go ahead largely

as per that report with Northern delivering 85 per cent of its pre-Covid services and TransPennine Express 60 per cent but adding some additional strengthening to match demand. A summary appears below, comparing the May 2021 timetable against what was initially operated in December 2020 (i.e. not against the January 2021 temporary timetables in operation at the time of writing). A full comparison is available in **Appendix 2**.

- On Northern, there are no changes planned to Sunday timetables. For weekdays, the principal changes are:
 - **Harrogate line:** 2 trains per hour (“2tph”) Leeds – Harrogate – Knaresborough with 1tph continuing to York: no extra fast Harrogate trains except for LNER London trains every other hour
 - **Airedale line:** approximately normal Skipton services; also 8/day on Settle – Carlisle and 6/day on Lancaster / Morecambe routes
 - **Huddersfield line:** Local services to/from Leeds continue at normal 1tph each, but Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford service **not** restored yet: only running three times per day
 - **Hallam line:** stopping trains Leeds – Castleford – Wakefield – Barnsley – Sheffield running hourly as normal, but faster Leeds – Wakefield – Barnsley – Sheffield services only running hourly, not 2tph (Nottingham trains running, but no Lincoln ones)
 - **Wakefield line:** stopping trains Leeds – Wakefield – Moorthorpe – Rotherham – Sheffield running hourly as normal; Doncaster stopping trains running hourly **without peak extra trains**
 - **York & Selby lines:** Leeds – Garforth – York services back to normal hourly patterns but without peak extra trains; (Halifax –) Leeds – Selby – Hull trains only running every **other** hour
 - **Calder Valley line:** Hull – Leeds – Bradford Int. – Halifax: drops from hourly (“1tph”) to every other hour (“0.5tph”)
- On Trans-Pennine Express, as expected there are few significant changes as against the December 2020 timetable, bar a small number of incremental improvements to York – Scarborough services and some of their connections from/to Leeds.
- As previously advised, no major changes are expected on Cross-Country, nor to LNER London services, except where major engineering works will require temporary timetables to run.
- The hoped-for restarting of Grand Central’s Bradford – Halifax – Wakefield – London services did indeed take place, and three trains are expected to continue to run every day each way after May.

2.11 It was reported to the last committee about a trial to remove the one-way system at Leeds Station which had been operating since May 2020 to help aid social distancing. Despite an increase in footfall at the station the trial was successful, and a revised arrangement is currently in place. Some barriers have been retained where there are pinch points to assist with the contraflow and monitoring will continue as the passenger numbers increase.

- 2.12 The rail industry is developing proposals for return to a 'new normal' through a roadmap to recovery which reflects both the challenges and opportunities of the current crisis. The steps detailed in the plan aim to encourage passengers back to rail and start to regrow demand which has been lost during the pandemic. One of the first steps for rebuilding confidence is to look at how and what messaging is communicated. In the first instance this has been to change from 'Only Travel if Essential' to 'Travel with Confidence' and 'Travel Safe' messaging but further travel campaigns are being considered which promotes both how to travel safely and how rail travel helps address the climate emergency, for example.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 Air quality improved during the periods of lower traffic levels. Local real-time road-side monitoring showed harmful NO₂ emissions on a downward trajectory during the early stages of lockdown and it can be inferred from this that CO₂ emissions were similarly reduced. It is therefore important that the recovered transport network delivers a more favourable situation for air quality and carbon generation than existed prior to the pandemic.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 Maintaining public transport for critical workers is key to ensuring continued public services during the lockdown restriction. The restoration of an effective, stable and affordable public transport network will be key in ensuring the post pandemic economic recovery is inclusive particularly to communities with limited access to private transport.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Combined Authority's revenue budget. This is manifested in reduced commercial income, increased bus station costs, lost commission from MCard sales and increased costs of bus service contracts where fares revenue is used to offset costs. The significant impact on bus service costs and funding is considered in a separate report on this agenda.

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 members of the Committee note the updates provided in this report.

11. Background Documents

11.1 Transport Recovery Plan, Item 6, Appendix 2, West Yorkshire Combined Authority, 27 July 2020, available via this link: <https://westyorkshire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=133&MIId=963&Ver=4>

11.2 During the Coronavirus outbreak, we are publishing a fortnightly economic monitor and a weekly dashboard to help better understand the changing situation. This includes information on public transport patronage. They are available via this link: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/economic-monitor/>

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Summary of public transport patronage data

Appendix 2 - May 2021 Timetable change summary