

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 14 October 2022

Subject: **Passenger Experience Update Report**

Director: Dave Pearson, Director Transport & Property Services

Author: Mick Bunting, Head of Passenger Experience

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 To provide a quarterly update on the performance of the transport network in West Yorkshire, including an update of the Combined Authority's passenger facing activity.

2. Information

Summary picture

- 2.1 The recovery of travel demand following the pandemic has stabilised with the strongest recovery during off-peak hours and weekends. An increase in peak commuting has been observed since the start of September although this is stronger on midweek days.
- 2.2 Since this report was last presented to the Committee, strike action affecting bus services operated by Arriva Yorkshire has been resolved and there is ongoing strike action on the rail network. The Chair of Transport Committee and the Mayor have continued to press the case through senior-level meetings with rail operators and via Rail North Committee to ensure there is a plan to restore rail service levels and to improve reliability.

Bus network

- 2.3 At the start of September 2022, bus patronage stood at around 70-80% of pre-pandemic levels. Patronage in August 2022 was higher than in August 2021 for each passenger cohort, signalling recovery outside of the seasonal trends associated with the start of the academic year (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.4 Service reliability continues to be impacted by the reduced availability of bus drivers and engineers. Bus operators advise that they continue to have higher vacancies than they would normally experience. Whilst recruiting new drivers remains challenging issues regarding licencing and testing are easing. This has given rise to reductions in service frequency and short-term cancellations. The Combined Authority is funding training for new bus drivers through the Adult Education Budget.

Rail network

- 2.5 Northern reports patronage at approximately 80% compared to pre-pandemic levels. Commuter levels are reported at approximately 40% based on season ticket sales; commuters will also be using other ticket types, so the recovery rate will be higher. Leisure travel remains high, with some Saturdays and Sundays proving to be busier than pre-pandemic.
- 2.6 TransPennine Express (TPE) reports demand at around 69% of pre pandemic levels which is a 11% decrease on the levels reported to the June meeting of Transport Committee, though this needs to be seen in the context of high levels of ongoing disruption (see below).
- 2.7 LNER reports demand at 111% of pre-pandemic levels with a strong recovery in West Yorkshire. As with Northern, recovery is being driven by leisure travellers, but LNER are also seeing a steady growth in business travellers with demand between 50-70% of pre-pandemic levels.
- 2.8 By the week commencing the 19 September 2022, average weekday footfall (excluding the bank holiday) at Leeds rail station was 76% of baseline pre-pandemic levels, however in contrast, average weekend station footfall has been exceeding baseline levels. This supports the stronger recovery for leisure travel reported by operators.
- 2.9 During the summer leisure demand was buoyant especially during the weekends when the weather was good. Northern refocused capacity for the summer towards routes such as Leeds – Settle – Carlisle and the Wolds Coast (Hull – Bridlington – Filey – Scarborough). Overcrowding continues to be monitored with no specific areas of concern, although events and management of those remains critical to address isolated issues. Northern continues to monitor special events to try anticipate demand.
- 2.10 To promote demand, Northern launched a “flash sale” on the 1 September with over 1,000 tickets available for journeys across the North of England available for £1. The £1 fares were available on bookings for travel between 6

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.

- 2.11 On Monday 15th August 2022 following a successful pilot trial in the West Yorkshire area, Northern launched new barcode season ticket across most Northern routes using the new 'sTicket' ('S' for Secure). sTicket replaces season eTickets and is designed to be more secure. sTicket works by creating a new barcode every 3 hours to prevent the use of screenshots and misuse, after 3 hours the old barcode will expire and no longer work on gatelines and handheld scanners and will show as expired.

Summary of network changes

Bus network

- 2.12 Bus services have been sustained throughout the pandemic by a combination of Government and Local Government funding. A Government condition of Covid funding was to undertake a review, jointly with bus operators, of the financial sustainability of the bus network following the predicted end of Covid funding in October 2022. Transport Committee were advised that 11% of bus mileage would not be commercially viable when funding ends.
- 2.13 Bus operators subsequently gave notice to the Combined Authority of intended service cuts and reductions when funding ended in October. A total of 100 services would have been affected with 24 routes withdrawn.
- 2.14 The Mayor and Leaders successfully lobbied government for an extension of this funding. On 19 August Government announced that funding will be extended for a further six months. Whilst the extended funding has prevented a widespread loss of service in October 2022, First and Arriva implemented some reductions in service frequencies and amended routes week beginning 2nd October. The Mayor has written to these bus companies to express her concern over these reductions.
- 2.15 All councillors will have received a district briefing for their area. A summary of the service changes is available online, and a link is provided in **Background Documents**.

Rail Network

- 2.16 The next rail timetable change comes into effect on Sunday 11 December 2022. A summary of the main changes is included as **Appendix 2**.
- 2.17 As reported in July 2022, Northern has been operating a reduced timetable on a several routes in our region. Councillor Hinchcliffe and the Mayor have pressed for a commitment that the cutbacks, driven by staffing factors, would be reversed for the December 2022 timetable change. Commitment to this was secured, and as shown in the summary, in almost all cases services will be restored to December 2021 levels.

- 2.18 In the case of the afternoon “school train” from Bradford / Frizinghall to Ilkley, a withdrawn service was reinstated from the start of the new school year in September. Northern has indicated that they believe there will be sufficient available staff to operate the December 2022 timetable reliably.
- 2.19 Combined Authority officers have shared with Northern a list of further issues which have become apparent from additional scrutiny of the timetables, feedback from partners and longer-standing issues. This includes suggestions for improvements that could be made in the shorter and medium terms, and it is intended to discuss these further with the operator. Main issues with the December 2022 timetable are noted at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.20 A particular issue will continue for the Pontefract – Wakefield Kirkgate service in the mornings, impacting Streethouse and Featherstone. A large gap between morning services restricts access to Wakefield / Leeds and Pontefract, which impacts on journeys to work and further education. This is only partially addressed the December timetable change. Officers continue to push for a solution to this issue, which is compounded by reductions to the local bus network earlier this year.
- 2.21 Discussion is ongoing regarding the May 2023 timetable proposals, which have increasing financial constraints and ongoing workforce changes as their context. Ticket revenues have still not fully recovered since the Pandemic, and inflationary pressures are also putting additional strain on budgets. The Mayor and Councillor Hinchcliffe continue to make the case to Government for adequate levels of financial support for rail services in the north to support recovery and ensure rail services remain affordable. These discussions are happening with and through Transport for the North.
- 2.22 On TransPennine Express, the December 2022 timetable is expected to see increases in services on the main Liverpool / Manchester – Huddersfield – Leeds – York / Hull route, though not to pre-Covid levels. Route changes mean that Hull services will be linked through to Liverpool, with Scarborough services running to Manchester Piccadilly. Some Scarborough / Newcastle services will make peak-only calls at Marsden and Slaithwaite, maintaining two trains per hour in the peaks at these stations.
- 2.23 Services operated by LNER, Grand Central and CrossCountry are expected to see very few changes impacting West Yorkshire at the December timetable change.

Passenger network performance

Bus network

- 2.24 As part of the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and in collaboration with bus operators, the Combined Authority generated ambitious targets in relation to improving bus services, including key performance

indicators for decreased journey times and improved reliability and punctuality of services.

- 2.25 Department for Transport has stated that they expect regular monitoring and reporting of performance against these targets and are due to confirm the requirements for this as part of the formal grant letter, which the Combined Authority will receive upon completion of the Enhanced Partnership statutory process. It is intended that this reporting will also be shared with Transport Committee members on a regular basis going forward.

Rail network

- 2.26 Rail strikes have continued to affect the rail network, with action by RMT impacting Network Rail and 13 train operating companies, including TransPennine Express, Northern, LNER and CrossCountry on 27 June, 18 and 20 August. TSSA members also took strike action on 18 and 20 August, reducing further the ability to provide services these days. Northern and TPE were only operating around 10% of usual services, with many routes and stations having no services. Operating hours were restricted to around 07:30 to 18:00 on strike days, with impacts on services the days before and after strikes, particularly at the start of service. Replacement bus services were provided on the Penistone line (due to full closure of the line) and existing buses in place to mitigate Northern's service reductions continued to be provided – but in most cases trains were not replaced by buses on strike days.
- 2.27 Northern issued 'Do Not Travel' advice for strike days, and TPE advised only to travel if 'essential'. Refunds were made available to those passengers who booked travel on a strike day and were unable to change it to an alternative. Train operators looked to ensure that where special events were due to take place, steps to mitigate any foreseen issues were taken by providing additional information or staff assistance.
- 2.28 Members of the train drivers' union, ASLEF, took strike action on 30 July and 13 August. LNER was affected on 30 July (a very limited service was available, and passengers were advised not to travel), and both LNER and CrossCountry were affected on 13 August. No services were run by CrossCountry on the latter day, and passengers were asked to seek alternative modes of transport. LNER's service was limited.
- 2.29 Strikes planned in September were suspended following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. These were subsequently reorganised to 1st October (ASLEF / RMT / TSSA), 5th October (ASLEF) and 8th October (RMT / TSSA). Northern have indicated no services will be running on the first two dates, other operators are still working through plans at the time of writing.
- 2.30 Rail Delivery Group is leading the ongoing negotiations on behalf of operators on a national basis. As and when progress is made nationally, Northern and TPE would be provided with a mandate for local negotiations to reach appropriate agreements.

- 2.31 The performance reports for Northern and TransPennine Express (TPE) are included in **Appendix 3**, which includes a description of the different performance measures mentioned below.
- 2.32 Since the last update in July punctuality has declined and cancellations have increased for both operators. The main dip in performance occurred in period 4 (July) but has started to improve steadily again in period 5 (August). Time to 3 (Percentage trains calling at station stops within 3 minutes of the planned time) for Northern and TPE remains well below 90% and for the most recent four-week period 5 sits at 81.21% and 75.50% respectively.
- 2.33 Cancellations saw Northern at 4.07% (3.09% in the East region) and TPE at 6.28%. These figures exclude cancellations announced by the evening before ('P-coded'), which TPE has been making extensive use of, as set out below.
- 2.34 As reported to previously, train crew availability, including COVID-19-related training backlogs, staff absence (higher than average sickness levels for TPE especially) and withdrawal of rest day working agreements are all contributing to the high levels of cancellations and poor performance figures.
- 2.35 Northern and TPE are carrying out significant active driver recruitment, but training of drivers can take around 2 years to complete. Drivers leaving (for example to take up jobs with other operators or retirement), as well as dealing with training over and above the base requirement – such as for introducing new trains and major enhancements all adds to the complexity. TfN is championing an initiative proposed by Northern for a dedicated training academy in the north to offer relief in the longer term for all operators.
- 2.36 TPE cancellations continue to have a severe impact in West Yorkshire. Many of these are at short notice, made on the day or the evening before. The latter (known as 'P-coded' or planned cancellations if notified before 22:00 on the evening before) are currently not counted in the cancellation figures. The official cancellation figures therefore do not reflect the very poor passenger experience. Notification of any replacement buses is also usually late in the evening before or not until the actual morning, which has caused further passenger frustration.
- 2.37 On TPE, for the most recent period 5 (August), 21% of services were cancelled (approximately 16% were P-coded and 5% were same day cancellations). On Saturdays in the same period there was a total of 25% cancellations (approximately 20% were P-coded and 5% were same day cancellations).
- 2.38 TPE's Manchester – Leeds – Hull services have been particularly badly affected by poor performance and P-coding, as have local stopping services between Manchester / Huddersfield / Leeds serving stations including Slaithwaite and Marsden, which rely on TPE for all their services. Cancellations have led to long gaps between services, sometimes of many hours, and severe crowding on services that do run, including impacts on Northern trains where these run routes alongside TPE.

- 2.39 On another part of TPE's network from Manchester via the West Coast Mainline and Carlisle to Scotland, the operator introduced a temporary reduced timetable in September to reduce on-the-day or late ad-hoc cancellations. TPE has indicated that they are currently examining options as part of the December timetable change to try and stabilise performance which is currently at unacceptable levels.
- 2.40 The Mayor has met with senior management at TPE to seek assurances that there is a clear plan in place to recover the reliability of its services, given the unacceptable level of disruption.
- 2.41 In these meetings, and via Rail North Committee, TPE has confirmed that it has an intense ongoing programme of crew training to address the following:
- to mitigate a backlog of pandemic-induced route knowledge loss
 - address delayed traction training (to be able to drive specific vehicles)
 - to prepare for timetable changes such as the Manchester Recovery Task Force December 2022 change and the impacts of the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU).
- 2.42 We continued to press TPE to take action to ensure passengers have reliable information on what services are expected to be operating. Poor reliability and cancellations on the rail network were also subject of intense debate at TfN Board on 29 September 2022, and TfN continues to press for deliverable recovery plans.
- 2.43 Exceptionally hot weather in early July had a significant impact on rail performance, with track temperatures recorded at 51°C. This leads to rail expansion with local speed restrictions introduced as a safety measure given the risk of buckling. There was also an increase in defects with lineside signalling due the performance of electrical components in the high temperatures. Network Rail has set up a committee to look at how infrastructure responds to high temperatures, and asset engineers have reviewed the failures to identify improvements to avoid future problems.
- 2.44 Trespass continues to be an issue. The Network Rail Route Crime Team are continuing to develop action plans in association with the British Transport Police, including increasing the number of patrols carried out by Mobile Operation Managers and the British Transport Police.
- 2.45 Northern has also been focussing on the Class 333 electric trains, as performance delays attributed to these was on the increase. Northern now have an improvement plan agreed with Siemens, who are responsible for the trains' maintenance in Leeds, to address this.

Passenger satisfaction and attitudes

Transport Focus Surveys

- 2.46 Throughout the pandemic, Transport Focus conducted nationally representative research around travel use. The latest iteration of this research now uses omnibus survey where 2000 members of the public are screened to identify bus and rail users outside of London, with weightings applied to make the results nationally representative of Great Britain. Reports are now published monthly, and a link is provided in **Background Documents**.
- 2.47 The latest insights from surveys published on the 23rd September are:
- 88% of bus and rail passengers were satisfied with their journey overall (with little change since the start of the year).
 - For bus, satisfaction with many measures has decrease over the last two waves including:
 - punctuality/reliability, down from 75 per cent to 71 per cent
 - provision of information during the journey, down from 68 per cent to 64 per cent
 - For bus, two measures of satisfaction have increased including value for money (up from 66% to 70%) and helpfulness and attitude of the drive (up from 78% to 81%).
 - For rail, over the last two survey waves, satisfaction increased for punctuality and reliability (from 77% to 82%), value for money (59% to 63%) and level of crowding (from 71% to 75%).
 - Leisure continues to be the most common reason for using the bus (58%), followed by commuting (23%).
 - Rail passengers have higher levels of satisfaction with punctuality and service frequency, but lower satisfaction on crowding and value for money.

Combined Authority Surveys

- 2.48 The next wave of the COVID-19 Transport Recovery Survey will begin data collection in mid-October 2022. This telephone survey series involves a representative sample of 1,000 West Yorkshire residents (with quotas for age, gender, district and ethnicity). Respondents are asked about current vs future mode share for different journey purposes; their views on use of public transport in relation to COVID-19; their commuting patterns (now and in the future); their views on home working; and their bicycle access and confidence cycling. A report on the results of the survey will be published on the Combined Authority website.

Updates on Combined Authority activity

Current usage indicators

- 2.49 **Appendix 4** includes a summary of several usage indicators of Combined Authority “Metro” branded activity which give a comparison between current

levels of demand and trends, including to the pre-pandemic position where available.

- 2.50 Use of services continues to be impacted by reduction in travel arising from the pandemic, although demand for travel information is increasing alongside increasing patronage. Weekly weekday Metro and MCard website page views are nearing pre-pandemic levels and Metroline weekday calls in September 2022 were 89% of 2019 levels, up 5% and 12% compared to 2021 and 2020 respectively.

Fares and ticketing

- 2.51 The Mayor's Fare was successfully launched on 4 September 2022 resulting in single tickets and days savers being capped at £2 and £4.50 respectively. An extensive promotional campaign has been undertaken to raise awareness of the initiative. Customer feedback has been positive with only a small number of very specific concerns raised in the early weeks of the scheme.
- 2.52 Bus ticket machines have been updated and actual journey data is being analysed against the forecasts provided by operators to ensure reimbursement is accurate. At the time of writing, the initiative had been operating for four weeks and it is early to draw conclusions as to patronage growth. Early indications show that around 10,000 people each day have obtained a saving from the £2 cap and almost all customers who previously bought a Day Ticket are paying the same or less. A customer making a typical interurban bus journey, for example from Bradford to Leeds, three days per week would save around £95 per year arising from the Mayor's Fares initiative.
- 2.53 Use of the MCard Mobile app continues to grow, and latest data indicates that 81% of all MCard sale transactions per month are now by mobile phone. This represents a significant move from smartcards to the app over the previous 12 months and indicates the growing popularity of mobile phone transactions for public transport ticketing.

Bus stations

- 2.54 Work to ensure safeguarding of vulnerable customers and to increase responsiveness to community needs continue across all bus stations with staff undertaking child protection, suicide prevention and dementia awareness training.
- 2.55 A major refurbishment of Leeds Bus Station was completed in August funded by the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme. The scheme includes new entrances, electronic signage, a revised travel centre/ retail space and solar panels.
- 2.56 The new Halifax Bus Station is progressing well, and work has almost finished on the main site excavations and the erection of the large steel building frame has now commenced. The new temporary facility remains open and fully

operational and will remain in place for about 18 months while the new bus station is being built.

2.57 Work is underway on two improvement projects at Bradford Interchange:

- Construction of the new travel centre on the bus station concourse is on programme to complete in November 2022 and once operational will replace the existing travel centre in the lower concourse area.
- The first phase of resurfacing and waterproofing of bus station carriageway started in October. There will be an impact on bus services throughout the works as stands will need to be closed to allow the resurfacing works to take place. The bus disruption team are engaged and will produce disruption plans on a phase-by-phase basis. The programme is due to run until April 2024

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1 Air quality improved during the periods of lower traffic levels during the lockdowns in the pandemic. Local real-time road-side monitoring showed harmful NO₂ emissions on a downward trajectory and it can be inferred from this that CO₂ emissions were similarly reduced.

3.2 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

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1 Ensuring an effective, stable, and affordable public transport network is important for equality and diversity.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 As reported on an accompanying report, inflationary pressures arising from fuel and wage cost growth are impacting on the Combined Authority and bus operators.

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 on the Passenger Experience in West Yorkshire provided in this report.

11. Background Documents

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>

Bus service changes in October 2022 are summarised in '*Public Transport Changes, Changes to West Yorkshire's public transport network between Sunday 2 and Monday 3 October 2022*', available via this link:

<https://www.wymetro.com/media/8808/public-transport-changes-3-oct-2022-13301.pdf>

The Combined Authority continues to produce a regular *West Yorkshire Economic and Transport Insights Report*. This includes information and analysis on public transport patronage, and is available via this link:

<https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/economic-monitor/>.

A regularly updated transport and economic recovery dashboard is available via this link:

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiaNTA5ZjIzZWQtdiOS00ZGNiLTlINmQtNWZmZmQ0ZDBkMjRiliwidCI6IjM0ZTkzYmZjLWVlbnJYtNDM0NS1hNGZILTgwNWl2N2U0ODBjMCIslmMiOjh9>

Transport Focus is publishing regular 'Travel During COVID-19' attitudinal and satisfaction surveys of potential and actual public transport users. These can be accessed via this link: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/home/coronavirus-latest/coronavirus-insight/>

The Combined Authority's COVID-19 transport survey results are published here: <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/documents/covid-19-transport-survey/>

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Insights on transport network use

Appendix 2 – Summary of May 2022 rail timetable changes

Appendix 3 – Rail network performance data

Appendix 4 – Metro branded activity measures