

**Report to:** Transport Committee

**Date:** 18 November 2022

**Subject:** **Bus & Rail Service Performance 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

## 1. Purpose of this Report

1.1 To provide an update on the performance of bus and rail services.

## 2. Information

2.1 At the last meeting of the Transport Committee, Members expressed concern about the current punctuality and reliability of bus and rail services and asked that the respective bus and rail operators attend to explain the steps being taken to restore passenger confidence in services.

### **Bus Service Performance**

2.2 Bus service performance is measured by reliability, which is the number of service journeys which actually operate, and punctuality, the percentage of buses operating on time (i.e. no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late) at the start of the route and at timing points along the route. The Bus Alliance collates figures from all bus companies on this, the latest quarterly figures West Yorkshire wide are:

<b>Month</b>	<b>Reliability</b>	<b>Punctuality (from the first stop)</b>	<b>Punctuality (stops along the way)</b>
July 2022	96.4%	91.5%	86.7%
August 2022	96.2%	91.8%	84.5%
September 2022	95.1%	88.9%	79.2%

- 2.3 The bus industry target is for 99.5% of registered bus service mileage to be operated (reliability) and 95% of buses to run no more than 1 minute early or 5 minutes late (punctuality). The above results show performance significantly less than the target and show a downward trajectory. They are aggregated over all operators at all times of the week and the passenger experience at busier times may be worse than this in some places.
- 2.4 The bus network continues to recover from the pandemic. As of October, bus patronage was around 80% of the equivalent month in 2019 although this differs by route and location. Service mileage has been reduced to 95% in response to lower demand and the reduced availability of bus drivers and engineers. Bus operators advise that they continue to have higher vacancies than they would normally experience.
- 2.5 Whilst recruiting new drivers remains challenging, issues regarding licencing and testing are easing. The Combined Authority is funding training for new bus drivers through the Adult Education Budget. This driver shortage has caused operators to reduce service frequency and make short-term cancellations.
- 2.6 Complaints about service punctuality and reliability have increased in 2022. The CA collate statistics on the number of complaints it receives about bus service performance. This year to date, around 42% of all complaints to the CA are due to bus services failing to operate.
- 2.7 Concerns have been raised regarding the accuracy of the real time information system which provides predicted bus arrival times at bus stops and on line. This involves tracking the movement of almost every bus in West Yorkshire and comparing it to the scheduled timetable. The system back office has recently been upgraded and work is in progress to validate the data and operating processes to ensure the accuracy of the predictions.
- 2.8 The Mayor together with the Chair and Vice Chair of Transport Committee held a roundtable with bus operators on 9<sup>th</sup> November to discuss and agree actions which can remedy the current poor performance and restore passenger confidence.
- 2.9 Bus Operators were invited to provide updates to the Committee and have submitted the following:

## First West Yorkshire

Whilst Leeds city centre and localised roadworks in places like Menston, Pool Bank and Shipley have created significant lost mileage and punctuality issues, the primary reasons for unacceptable performance relate to the ongoing shortage of drivers that we, along with the rest of the industry are facing. However, the level of focus and activity in the area of driver retention and attraction is immense and we are undertaking various measures such as pioneering part-time working in order to attract a more diverse candidate pool, designing new creative assets for driver attraction and retention focus with significant activity on employee engagement.

Passenger numbers on First West Yorkshire bus services are showing small, incremental growth and expected to be at approximately 86% of pre-covid levels by March 2023 (based on existing network, current plans). We continue to engage closely with WYCA but need to accept that the network must adapt to meet changing passenger behaviour and industry funding.

We remain focused on attracting more passengers to bus and have invested £1m+ in marketing & partnership initiatives in 2022/23 including a 'cost-of-living' & senior concessions campaign to stimulate growth this winter. Since attending the last Scrutiny meeting, we have continued to work with partners to invest in our service delivery including a new fares system with tap-on / tap-off technology in 2021 and over £5m in new buses on the Leeds-Bradford corridor this year and more recently almost £2m on 9 new buses going into service shortly in Huddersfield. We are actively engaged through the Enhanced Partnership including the identification and promotion of bus priority to improve reliability and journey time for customers.

## Arriva Yorkshire

In line with the national situation, Arriva Yorkshire continue to face challenges in driver recruitment and combined with increased traffic and some significant roadworks, are currently operating over 95% of their scheduled mileage.

In order to improve this position, Arriva are working in partnership with the Combined Authority to smoothly transition some of their contracts to other operators in order to better match the number of available drivers with the registered timetables. Arriva have successfully recruited and trained over 185 drivers so far this year and are due to welcome the first cohort of drivers from the 'Route to Success' programme supported by the Combined Authority.

Traffic delays across the region have impacted on punctuality with services suffering up to a 10% drop in on time performance since the summer with works such as the Newton Bar upgrade and Leeds City Square closure having significant impacts. Whilst it is acknowledged that many of these works will bring longer term benefits to buses, Arriva continue to work with the Local Highways Authorities and the Combined Authority to identify short term mitigation where possible.

In order to make bus travel more attractive Arriva are currently investing in Tap Out readers to enable Tap On, Tap Off ticketing throughout their West Yorkshire bus services in late 2022. This investment is aligned to the aspirations of the Bus Service Improvement Plan to bring multi-operator 'London Style' payment options to West Yorkshire.

Arriva are also working in partnership with the Combined Authority and Wakefield Council to bring 47 zero emission electric buses to Wakefield and build a brand new, purpose built, sustainable depot to the area.

Transdev (Team Pennine, Harrogate Bus Company, Keighley Bus Company, Coastliner)

Within West Yorkshire service performance has stabilised due to improvement in recruitment and retention at our West Yorkshire depots as a result of our expanded driver academy and increases in wage rates. We have some challenges still in Harrogate but timetable adjustments are to address this during November. Customer recovery has been strongest amongst Under 19s and is weakest amongst people with concession passes.

**Rail Network Performance**

- 2.10 Rail performance data is reported against 'to time' measures. These measures replace the familiar 'PPM' (Public Performance Measure) and are intended to represent a more 'real world' reflection of performance as experienced by passengers. The 'to time' measure records punctuality at all station stops (not just the final stop) and includes the number of trains that were either early, on time or up to '3' or '15' minutes late

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Time to 3 T-3	Percentage of Recorded Station Stops called at within 3 minutes of the planned time.
Time to 15 T-15	Percentage of Recorded Station Stops called at within 15 minutes of the planned time.
Cancelled	Services subject to cancellation (in full or in part).

- 2.11 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. Appendix 1 provides further details of current rail performance.
- 2.12 Rail Operators were invited to provide updates to the Committee and have submitted the following

## Northern Trains Ltd

- Northern, reduced the timetable earlier in the year, there were two reasons for this: Firstly, to ensure that we could deliver a reliable service that our customers could depend on. The second reason was to deliver what was a large amount of outstanding driver training.
- This training was the principal reason for the comparatively poor train service performance seen at the start of the year. It came about early in the pandemic, when all driver training ceased, simply because it is impossible to adequately socially distance in a driver's cab. Northern employs numerous drivers each year, many of whom are new to the railway, for obvious reasons their training requirements are great and time-consuming. There is far more to training than simply new drivers however, as each driver for obvious reasons must be fully conversant with the vehicles that they operate and the routes that they work over. This means training and certification, all of which takes time. Thankfully and because of a great deal of effort (not least by the trades unions), training restarted last year, but it was slow at first and the backlog was great.
- Therefore, as said above the purpose of these changes was twofold. Firstly, to enable us to operate a reliable service this summer, and secondly to protect future timetable iterations by allowing the headroom to complete the outstanding training. It must be said that both these things have happened, and even during the current issues caused by industrial disputes etc, we are managing to complete more than 100 days driver training per week and have our outstanding training back to a manageable level. Despite the privations of autumn, which more recently are causing issues, train service performance has also dramatically improved with cancellations now a shadow of what we were seeing during the early spring.
- Northern is therefore confident regarding a successful delivery of the increased service pattern contained in the winter timetable this December.  
TransPennine Express

## TransPennine Express Ltd

Performance delivered for Period 7 was: T-3 73.61%, T-15 95.77% and Cancellations 6.36%. In that period we saw a near doubling of the impacts on service performance from off network causes, other train operator incidents and Network Rail causes, compared to the previous four weeks. These issues have been a key driver of additional on-the-day disruption seen recently. These issues have included:

- the broken rail at Huyton which severely affected services across our network, not just between Manchester and Liverpool, with destinations

- through to Newcastle and Middlesbrough being cancelled due to that broken rail;
- flooding at Fairfield from a burst water main which closed and then affected the railway between Stalybridge and Manchester Piccadilly for days;
  - sadly there have been four fatalities which have understandably had a significant impact on service running (as well as impacting on training);
  - a number of weather related incidents – including dewirements and speed restrictions;
  - a broken down freight train at Mossley that blocked the core artery on our network;
  - signalling failures, most notably at Gorton and Huddersfield;
  - trees down on the line at Ashton-under-Lyne yesterday; and
  - another passenger operator and two freight train-related blockages on the South Route yesterday.

In terms of performance issues TransPennine Express is responsible for from a cancellations perspective they had seen until recently an improving trend. The navigation of a 10-day major blockade at Newcastle at the start of October, punctuated by three days of industrial action and its aftermath, was challenging. They have also experienced a short term increase in sickness in recent weeks that, combined with the heavy training workload required to deliver Transpennine Route Upgrade divisionary requirements, has affected services.

Over the summer and into the autumn a number of trainee drivers have become fully qualified at TransPennine Express and are now additional to the base driver resource. They currently have more drivers than they have ever had before with 500 drivers currently competent and a training pipeline in place for an additional 78 trainee drivers and qualified drivers and 73 new recruits.

In normal times, driver rest day working would have given much greater flexibility in responding to the incidents outlined and lowering the level of cancellation rate. Restoration of rest day working would also make a material difference to the ability to speed up driver training, both for new trainee drivers and the training required for the Transpennine Route Update. TransPennine Express are currently awaiting authority to have the ability to hold discussions on a proposed and meaningful rest day working agreement.

TransPennine Express along with others in the rail industry continues to work at a national level with the trade unions to find a resolution to the issues raised through formal disputes.

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 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.

### **3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications**

3.1 Sustaining a reliable public transport service is essential to promote travel by lower carbon modes.

### **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 on bus and rail service performance provided in this report.

**11. Background Documents**

None.

**12. Appendices**

Appendix 1 Rail Performance