

Report to: Transport Committee

Date: 10 March 2023

Subject: **Passenger Experience Update Report**

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

2. Information

Summary picture

- 2.1 The recovery of travel demand following the pandemic has stabilised with evidence that the recovery on bus and rail continues to build, albeit slowly.
- 2.2 Network performance remains a concern, and we continue to work with industry to try address these issues where possible.

Bus network

- 2.3 Since the start of the new year, overall weekday bus patronage (which includes all passenger cohorts) has steadily increased to 85% of the pre pandemic baseline (March 2020). Adult bus patronage now stands at 81% of baseline levels, which compares to 69% for the equivalent week in 2022 (see **Appendix 1**).

- 2.4 Service reliability continues to be impacted by traffic congestion and reduced availability of bus drivers and engineers. This was a cause for concern in 2021/22, however bus operators are advising that staff shortages are easing.

Rail network

- 2.5 Northern reports patronage at approximately 83% compared to pre-pandemic levels, with higher levels when services are stable. Leisure travel continues to lead the recovery, with some Saturdays and Sundays regularly proving to be busier than pre-pandemic. Mondays tend to be the quietest day of the week.
- 2.6 TransPennine Express (TPE) reports demand at around 75% of pre-pandemic levels which is an increase on figures reported to a previous meeting of Transport Committee, despite the continuing issues with service delivery.
- 2.7 LNER indicates demand at 100% of pre-pandemic levels with a split of 75% for the leisure market and 25% for the business market. CrossCountry demand is about 75% of pre-pandemic levels with the leisure market also prevalent; Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays being the busiest days.
- 2.8 Following Christmas and strike days in January and February, average weekday footfall at Leeds rail station increased to 76% of baseline levels. Weekend levels remained near peak levels around the same time.
- 2.9 As can be expected, strikes are impacting demand significantly during the week of the strike but recovering in the week following.
- 2.10 To promote demand, Northern launched a “flash sale” on the 10 January with over 1 million tickets available for journeys across the North of England with three price points available: 50p, £1 and £1.50. The fares were available on bookings for travel between 17 January and 10 March. 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. Northern reports the sale was successful.

Summary of network changes

Bus network

- 2.11 Bus services have been sustained throughout the pandemic by a combination of Government and local government funding. On 17 February, Government announced that the current funding will extend until the end of June 2023 however there is no indication that funding will continue beyond that date. Bus operators have shared confidentially their intentions should this funding cease.
- 2.12 First West Yorkshire have registered a range of service changes from 2 April 2023 the details of which have been shared with Transport Committee members. These changes largely involve reducing/ withdrawing some services they consider to be marginal redeploying the buses and drivers on restoring frequency on busier routes.

- 2.13 Arriva Yorkshire have registered route and service changes in their network east of Leeds which restores links to Thorpe Park following service changes in October 2022.

Rail network

- 2.14 The next rail timetable change is on Sunday, 21 May 2023. An analysis of known changes is included at **Appendix 2**.
- 2.15 On Northern, the principal changes are:
- Reduction in services on the Bradford Forster Square – Ilkley / Skipton routes during Monday to Saturday daytimes (from around 0930 to 1500) from half-hourly to hourly. The peak-time and early evening service levels at half-hourly are maintained.
 - Leeds – Bradford – Halifax – Manchester Victoria (– Chester): Additional hourly service on Sundays. This is very welcome as it gives the Calder Valley line a long-awaited second Sunday train per hour, leaving only the Leeds – Dewsbury – Brighouse – Calder Valley – Manchester missing on Sundays.
 - Withdrawal of the limited train service between Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford, to be replaced by a bus service until December 2023.
- 2.16 Northern's reduced frequency between the peaks on the Bradford – Ilkley / Skipton services is intended to reduce cancellation levels whilst availability of train crews remains tight, by creating more spare driver capacity. This position is expected to recover as more staff are trained and long-term sickness levels improve. Existing half-hourly service levels in the morning and evening peaks are maintained, including those serving local school flows. Direct engagement by Cllr Hinchcliffe and the Mayor ensures that Northern understands the need to reinstate the daytime frequency to half-hourly when possible. However, full reinstatement will be subject to agreement by Rail North Partnership (DfT) as part of the Business Plan process. We will continue to work with and through TfN to make the case via the Rail North arrangements, and Cllr Hinchcliffe has made specific representations on this matter at Rail North Committee.
- 2.17 The situation with the Huddersfield – Wakefield – Castleford service is disappointing. Service provision has been sporadic for some years, including before the pandemic, with bus substitutions at times since 2020. At present the service runs only three times a day each way (plus one to / from Wakefield Kirkgate only), with no trains on Sundays.
- 2.18 It was planned that TPE would extend its existing hourly Manchester – Huddersfield service, to run on via Wakefield Kirkgate and Castleford through to York from May 2023. This would replace and fulfil the role of the Northern service between Huddersfield and Castleford. This is a proposal that the

Combined Authority strongly supports, since it improves connectivity, including new links to employment sites at Sherburn-in-Elmet.

- 2.19 However, ongoing issues with TPE mean that at late-notice the decision was made to defer this change to the December 2023 timetable change. Northern was not expecting to run the service beyond May, so had not 'bid' the services through industry processes. We are informed that this means the paths are now unavailable. As a result, Northern has been instructed to run rail replacement buses, with journey times around double those of the trains, from May to December. This is considered unacceptable, and we are pushing to find an alternative solution to maintain or re-establish a rail service as soon as possible. Discussions continue with the Rail North Partnership regarding this, including via Rail North Committee, where this matter was raised.
- 2.20 Few major changes are proposed to TPE's timetable, although an acute local issue that arose in the December 2022 timetable will be addressed. Two key trains in the afternoon peak from Huddersfield had their stops at Dewsbury removed, creating two service gaps of around an hour for students and workers returning from Huddersfield to Dewsbury. Eastbound calls at Dewsbury at 1608 and 1712 are reintroduced. This follows engagement with TPE via local members and Cllr Kaushik.
- 2.21 On CrossCountry, the overall service pattern on the Scotland – Newcastle – York – Leeds – Sheffield – Birmingham – South-West corridor stays the same, with more services running through to / from Plymouth and Penzance. An additional train benefiting West Yorkshire is introduced, providing an extra service from Sheffield (1748) to Wakefield (1817), Leeds (1833) and York (1901) as part of a Reading to Newcastle train. This introduces additional capacity in the afternoon peak from Sheffield, reinstating the position prior to the pandemic.
- 2.22 CrossCountry has flagged that operating more services in various parts of the country from May means that some trains currently operating as double-length trains (8 cars +) will be shortened to single units (4 or 5 cars). CrossCountry has suggested it will avoid where possible services that can be busy – officers have specifically raised concerns regarding the key Leeds – Sheffield corridor which is an especially busy section of the route.
- 2.23 Changes which were expected but which are not now happening in May include the introduction of the proposed second Leeds – Wakefield Westgate – Sheffield fast train, to be run by Northern. We are seeking confirmation that this has only been postponed. A final decision will be subject to agreement with Rail North Partnership as part of Northern's Business Plan.
- 2.24 Some issues identified with the December 2022 timetable, including the long-standing gap in services in the morning around Wakefield and Pontefract, have not been resolved for the May timetable. We continue to explore with Northern finding a solution to these in future, along with other service priorities and issues (some long-standing) with current timetables.

- 2.25 Working with and through Transport for the North, as well as by direct engagement with Ministers we have continued to make a strong case for the wider value of local rail services. This is in the context of short-term pressure to find savings in the rail support budgets, including to absorb the impact of inflation. To date, this activity has been successful in ensuring that service levels have, overall, been protected. The potential implications for December 2023 and May 2024 service changes continue to be worked through in negotiations between DfT and operators, with local engagement via the Rail North arrangements.
- 2.26 As reported to Transport Committee in February, there will be significant work on TransPennine Upgrade (TRU) through 2023 leading to various 'blockades' where services are altered. A major blockade took place at Morley station over 9 days from the 4 to 12th February 2023. This was one of the first major blockades in West Yorkshire, and a 'lessons learnt' exercise will be carried out with industry to ensure passenger information and disruption management is as effective as possible. Details will be fed back to a future meeting.

Passenger network performance

Bus network

- 2.27 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 on this from the three major bus companies in the region (First, Arriva and Transdev), the latest quarterly figures West Yorkshire wide are:

Month	Reliability	Punctuality (from the first stop)	Punctuality (stops along the way)
October 2022	94.9%	81.9%	77.3%
November 2022	95.3%	86.5%	75.6%
December 2022	95.4%	87.3%	77.6%

- 2.28 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 over the full period. The results are currently 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.
- 2.29 Transport Committee members have asked for a more detailed analysis of these results by area. There are a number of data issues to resolve to enable this and it is hoped to offer greater detail in this regard later in 2023.

Rail network

- 2.30 Rail strikes have continued to affect the rail network. Action by RMT impacted operators on the 13,14,16,17 December 2022 and 3,4,6,7 January 2023; in addition, there was an ASLEF strike on the 5 January 2023 and action by RMT affecting Network Rail on the 24-27 December 2022. RMT also introduced an overtime ban from the 18 December 2022 to the 2 January 2023. Performance in period 10 was significantly impacted as a result. Passengers were advised to check before travelling.
- 2.31 Strike action also took place on the 1 and 3 February by both the ASLEF and RMT unions, Northern and TPE ran no services and LNER ran a limited service. At the time of writing more strikes have been announced by the RMT Union on the 16, 18 and 30 March, and 1 April which will impact on all operators. Network Rail will be impacted on the 16 March only. Details are awaited on the exact impact, but they fall on the start of Easter Holidays for many. The Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) are no longer involved in the strike action as its members have accepted an offer including a pay deal.
- 2.32 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.
- 2.33 Since the last update to Transport Committee punctuality has improved for Northern and declined for TPE. Both operators saw a significant increase in cancellations. Time to 3 (Percentage trains calling at station stops within 3 minutes of the planned time) for Northern and TPE remains well below 80% and for the most recent four-week period 10 sits at 74.4% and 62.1% respectively.
- 2.34 Cancellations saw Northern at 8.0% (7.17% in the East region) and TPE at 11.9%. These figures exclude cancellations announced by the evening before ('P-coded'), which TPE continues to make extensive use of, as set out below.
- 2.35 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. Strike action by ASLEF, TSSA and RMT has also impacted the rate at which training can be delivered. TPE's performance continues to suffer acutely from these issues, compounded by higher than anticipated levels of drivers leaving the business and increased training demands related to network enhancement programmes (principally Trans Pennine Route Upgrade and Manchester Task Force).
- 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 official cancellation statistics. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) recently wrote to all Train Operating

Companies (TOCs) and Network Rail regarding P-Coding and the requirement to introduce a more passenger friendly and transparent way of working when late changes must be made, which has led to these cancellations being routinely reported. Network Rail and all TOCs are to work together to come a solution whereby P-coded pre-cancellations are counted against their true cause and within the official statistics and to ensure that cancellations remain visible to passengers. Network Rail have been asked to provide the plan and associated timeline to ORR no later than Friday 10th March 2023.

- 2.37 On TPE, for the most recent period 10 (December), 32% of services were cancelled (approximately 20% were P-coded and 12% were same day cancellations). On Saturdays in the same period there was a total of 15% cancellations (approximately 12% were P-coded and 3% were same day cancellations).
- 2.38 In November 2022 the Secretary of State for Transport met Northern mayors to discuss the impact of ongoing poor performance. Following this meeting, DfT agreed a revised Rest Day Working mandate for TPE and Northern, and a revised offer was put to ASLEF.
- 2.39 TPE experienced a worsening of performance prior to Christmas 2022, due to issues with rostering systems. Together with pressure from Northern leaders and MPs, this culminated with the Secretary of State requesting a comprehensive recovery plan from TPE. The Rail Minister, Huw Merriman, is now holding regular meetings with Rail North Partnership and TPE to monitor the position.
- 2.40 The Recovery Plan was submitted to Rail North Partnership by TPE in early February 2023. The full Recovery Plan has not been shared, and a copy has been requested. A summary presentation was made to Rail North Committee members and Northern mayors, which suggests the focus initially is on reducing on-the-day cancellations and then reducing P-coding over several months, for a c. 60% recovery by June 2023. It has been indicated that without a rest day working agreement in place improvement will only be gradual.
- 2.41 The Mayor met with the Rail Minister Huw Merriman in late February for a constructive meeting regarding TPE service improvement. The Minister acknowledged that the service delivery isn't meeting the needs of passengers, and that improvement is required urgently. The Department for Transport is reviewing the Recovery Plan. The Mayor reiterated the position that TPE's contract shouldn't be renewed based on current performance.
- 2.42 A further update on the overall position with TPE's Recovery Plan is expected at the Transport for the North Board on 23 March.
- 2.43 Horbury junction suffered a broken rail on 28 December, affecting services from Leeds, Castleford, and Wakefield to Barnsley, Sheffield, Nottingham and Lincoln. A temporary fix for the track was implemented to bring services back to normal in January with a permanent fix planned for March. Whitehall

Junction on the west side of Leeds station is also affected by a broken rail with a temporary fix in operation until a part can be sought. This is impacting performance.

- 2.44 Network Rail has redefined boundaries for several of their Mobile Operations Managers (MOM) teams, to reduce their span of control and improve responsiveness to incidents. The extra MOM capacity enables Network Rail to carry out more short-term preventative actions than previously, either weather-driven (proactively de-icing points not equipped with point heaters) or year-round activities (for example, actively looking for gaps in fencing, interventions in schools, station presence). Network Rail are also working closely with embedded BTP (British Transport Police) officers and using drone capability where possible to speed up post-incident recovery.

Passenger satisfaction and attitudes

Transport Focus Surveys

- 2.45 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**.
- 2.46 The latest insights from surveys published on the 27th January 2023 were:
- 88% of bus passengers were satisfied with their journey overall (with little change since October 2022 where satisfaction fell to 81%).
 - 82% of rail passengers were satisfied with their journey overall, down from 84% a month ago. For both bus and rail, satisfaction increases with age.
 - For bus, satisfaction with value for money increased to 73%, up from 70% at the end of November. Satisfaction with punctuality also increased to 74% from 68% at the end of November.
 - For rail, satisfaction with punctuality/reliability fell from 77% (a month ago) to 72% in the most recent survey. Journey time also fell from 85% to 80%.
 - 91% of bus passengers who had used a bus in the last 7 days reported feeling safe in relation to COVID-19. For rail passengers, this figure is slightly higher at 94%.
 - Compared to rail passengers, bus passengers reported higher levels of satisfaction with value for money (73% for bus vs 62% for rail), and levels of crowding (88% for bus vs 73% for rail).

Updates on Combined Authority activity

Current usage indicators

- 2.47 **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.
- 2.48 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 at or just below pre-pandemic levels and Metroline weekday calls in January 2023 were 96% of January 2020 levels.

Fares and ticketing

- 2.49 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. The results of the first three months of operation were reported to the Transport Committee in February 2022.
- 2.50 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

- 2.51 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.
- 2.52 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.
- 2.53 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.
- 2.54 At Bradford Interchange, construction of the new travel centre on the bus station upper concourse was completed in November 2022. 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 progressing at pace and due to run until April 2024.

- 2.55 The Combined Authority has received a significant Levelling Up Fund allocation. A programme of works is in development to complement City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) funding with significant works planned for on-street improvements, including bus stop shelter renewal and green shelters. This also extends to improvements to small centres and unstaffed stations, and an allocation for Leeds Bus Station roof to address the long-standing issue of leaks.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 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?CId=133&MIId=963&Ver=4>

Bus service changes in December, January and February 2023 are summarised and published on the Metro website. The summary documents can be accessed via this link: <https://www.wymetro.com/plan-a-journey/travel-news/service-changes/>

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=eyJrljoiNTA5ZjZlZWQtdNDdiOS00ZGNiLTIINmQtNWZmZmQ0ZDBkMjRiliwidCI6IjM0ZTkzYmZjLWVjYtNDM0NS1hNGZILTgwNWl2N2U0ODJjMCIsImMiOjh9>

Transport Focus continues to publish 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