

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

**AT A MEETING OF THE RAIL WORKING GROUP
HELD AT WELLINGTON HOUSE ON
THURSDAY 5 APRIL 2007**

PRESENT: Councillor E Smaje (Chair)
Councillors S Khan, K Rhodes and C Townsley

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no personal or prejudicial interests declared by members at the meeting.

29. MINUTES

Minute 22 - Network Rail Presentation - Members commended the Chairman of the Authority, Councillor King, for his hard work and efforts with the British Transport Police and Crown Prosecution Service concerning the spate of cable thefts in the region, particularly on the Wakefield and Pontefract lines.

Minute 24 - Train Performance Reporting - Following comments at the Authority meeting in March, it was confirmed that industry data on every rail service delay/cancellation was available to the Chair and Members of the Working Group at the meeting. A summary of the train performance data for period 9 and 10 had also been included on the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2007 be approved.

30. NORTHERN FRANCHISE UPDATE

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive regarding the operating performance of local rail services within West Yorkshire provided by Northern Rail.

Cancellations and Punctuality

Members were informed that service cancellations had averaged at 0.8% for each period during October to February, which was an increase on the same period last year. However, it was reported that punctuality over the same

period had improved by 1.8% on the previous year with 86.7% of services arriving on time.

The Working Group noted the reasons for the service delays/cancellations, including the ongoing problem of copper cable thefts. In an attempt to combat this issue, Network Rail had co-ordinated an action plan to reduce such incidents. It was reported that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Authority were scheduled to meet with the British Transport Police to discuss the impact of this issue on rail passengers and how best to approach the Crown Prosecution Service in an attempt to increase the legal penalties awarded to offenders. Members commended this course of action and suggested that the Chair of the Rail Working Group be invited to attend the meetings. It was also requested that the outcome of the meeting with the BTP be circulated to Members before the next meeting of the group. Members commented on the need for rail staff and passengers to be vigilant in this regard. In response, it was stated that Members' concerns would be raised with Network Rail and Northern, with a view to a progress report being submitted to the next meeting of the group.

Strengthenings

Members were informed that during period 11 the Caldervale line suffered from a shortage of available units. Metro had raised this issue with Northern and improvements had been evident towards the end of period 12. In this respect, Northern would continue to provide additional monitoring/focus to ensure continuity.

Service Quality Performance

It was reported that issues surrounding maintenance faults still remained, although it was recognised that some improvements had been made with regard to litter picking and cleansing. Members noted that negotiations were ongoing between Northern Rail and their maintenance supplier, with a view to improving problem areas that had been evident in the past year.

Rolling Stock Developments

The Working Group noted that Northern Rail had secured 30 Class 15x 'Sprinter' units, which would be phased into the current fleet between May and December 2007. The additional units would address strengthening and overcrowding issues and also meet ongoing patronage growth.

Huddersfield Ticket Barrier

Following a meeting between Northern and TransPennine, it was confirmed that steps had been implemented by both operators to reduce queue times and improve customer relations in the station. The current arrangements were operating on a temporary basis. Members were informed that Northern and TransPennine were currently investigating a permanent barrier arrangement and that Metro would continue to monitor the situation.

The Chair informed the group of comments made at Kirklees PCC concerning passengers avoiding the purchase of a ticket at the barrier by exiting the station via two public houses located near to the concourse. Officers confirmed that investigations had been undertaken in this regard and that only one passenger had been found using these exits without a ticket.

Halifax and Sowerby Bridge Rail Stations

The Chair highlighted concerns at Halifax rail station in respect of litter collection, staffing issues, road resurfacing problems and remedial works to the canopy. The Group was advised that whilst litter collection had improved slightly other issues were still outstanding. Members were assured that these problems would be brought to the attention of Northern, although many of the other issues were associated with the fact that the building was listed.

Discussions ensued concerning the issue of inadequate security lighting at Sowerby Bridge rail station, particularly in respect of the underpass.

In view of the above, it was reported that a visit to Halifax and Sowerby Bridge rail stations had been arranged to take place on 13 April 2007 to which all Members of the group were invited to attend.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the outcome of the meeting with the British Transport Police be circulated to Members before the next meeting of the Working Group.
- (c) That a progress report regarding the copper cable thefts be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group.

31. INDUSTRY UPDATE

The Working Group considered a progress report of the Passenger Transport Executive on a number of rail industry issues.

GNER Timetable Changes

Members were advised of changes to GNER's timetable, which would be effective from 21 May 2007 and included the introduction of a full half hourly service between Leeds - Wakefield - London. An additional 12 trains would operate daily bringing the overall total number of trains between Leeds and London to 65. However, it was reported that, as a result of these additions, one of 2 daily through trains between Bradford Forster Square and London would now start/terminate at Leeds rather than continue to/travel from Bradford. It was acknowledged that this change was in line with the franchise

specification and that frequent local services were available between Bradford and Leeds.

Grand Central

It was noted that Grand Central planned to commence its initial service of 3 trains per day between Sunderland and London Kings Cross from the timetable change in May.

ECML Franchise Replacement

As discussed at the last meeting of the Group, an invitation to tender for the East Coast Main Line franchise had been issued to the four bidders at the beginning of March. Bids were expected by Arriva Trains, First Group, National Express Group and joint venture Stagecoach/Virgin by early June, with a view to announcing the successful bidder by Autumn 2007. Metro had written to all four bidders emphasising the need for a high quality service, which was both affordable and provided links to areas across the city region. A progress report concerning this issue would be submitted to a future meeting of the group.

High Level Output Statement

It was reported that a High Level Output Statement (HLOS) was being developed by the DfT as part of the Government's spending review. It would be accompanied by a Statement of Funds Available and would specify what the Government would wish to purchase from the rail network for 2009/14. It was anticipated that the HLOS would be published in Summer 2007 and was likely to include high level specifications such as performance, capacity and safety, which would be delivered via franchise specifications. In this respect, Members were assured that Metro would continue to make representations on behalf of West Yorkshire.

Regional Planning Assessment

The Working Group was informed that the Regional Planning Assessment (RPA) for Yorkshire and Humber was still in its draft stages. Metro had worked closely with the team drafting the document and had provided data/evidence to support the very high growth in passenger numbers seen in West Yorkshire. Following publication of the RPA a progress report would be submitted to a future meeting of the group.

Route Utilisation Studies (RUS)

It was reported that the final draft of the East Coast Main Line consultation document, which had been developed by Network Rail, was scheduled to be published in May following final approval by the Stakeholder Management Group. The outcome would be reported to a future meeting of the Working Group. Members were also informed that the Yorkshire and Humber RUS

had commenced, which would include the availability of paths on the ECML between Wakefield Westgate - Leeds.

Councillor Rhodes raised the issue of the Pontefract line service, which now terminated at Wakefield Kirkgate station, but used to extend to Wakefield Westgate. He hoped this service would be reinstated once Westgate station had been re-developed and the extra platform had been added.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted.

32. RAIL PLAN 6

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive on matters relating to the delivery of Rail Plan 6.

Low Moor Station

Members were advised that it was necessary to purchase land near to the station in order to facilitate the future construction of the site. In this respect, Metro had arranged a meeting with the owner, with a view to progressing this.

Kirkstall and Apperley Bridge

It was reported that the imminent signing of the Section 106 Agreement would secure a significant contribution from the developer of the Kirkstall Forge site, which would enable the development of the two stations. Once signed, Metro would engage Network Rail on the development of the initial designs and the full business case for both stations.

Access Improvements at Ilkley and Garforth

It was confirmed that work to provide additional access to the north side of Ilkley station was nearly completed. However, development works to Garforth had been delayed due to design issues concerning the access ramp. These were being resolved with Northern and the DfT had agreed to carry over earmarked funding for the scheme to the next financial year.

Wakefield Kirkgate Rail Station

The meeting was advised that Network Rail had identified the site as a 'strategic depot'. Members expressed concern at the planning implications of such an initiative, especially as the immediate area was currently being redeveloped for residential and hotel purposes. It was requested that a progress report regarding this issue be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group.

Minor Station Accessibility Improvements

Members noted that the third and final phase of minor accessibility improvement works at rail stations on the Harrogate, Pontefract, Penistone and Hallam lines was nearing completion.

Class 321 and 155 Refurbishment

Members noted that the renovation of the Class 321 electric train fleet had been completed and that the refurbishment/repainting of the Class 150, 155 and 158 fleets still continued.

Tram-Train Update

As part of the Leeds City Region Transport Vision, Metro was working with Network Rail to develop a brief on Tram-Train, which was considered a core part of the rail plan. The next stage would consider the feasibility of introducing the technology in the Leeds City Region and the development of a Major Scheme Business Case for the proposals. It was anticipated that this work would commence in June 2007.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That a progress report concerning the development of Wakefield Kirkgate rail station be submitted to the next meeting of the Working Group.

33. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Working Group considered a recommendation to exclude the press and public from Agenda Item 8, Service Changes - December 2007, which contained exempt information as defined in paragraph 5 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED - It was agreed that because the report contained rail network changes, which were subject to the approval of the rail industry regulatory bodies and must, therefore, be regarded as commercially confidential until such approval was obtained, the public interest would be better served by maintaining the exemption and, therefore, the press and public was excluded for this item.

34. SERVICE CHANGES

The Working Group considered a report of the Passenger Transport Executive regarding possible changes to the rail services on the Huddersfield and Caldervale lines from December 2007.

Members considered a report about proposals from Northern Rail for services on the Huddersfield and Calder Valley lines. These proposals had been fed into the rail industry's timetable planning process and would require Metro's approval, as co-signatory to the franchise. Members noted the potential enhancements from Brighouse and Calder Valley to Leeds and the adjustments to services on the Huddersfield line. The Group asked to be advised of the outcome of this timetable planning process together with passenger usage statistics at the affected stations.

RESOLVED - That the Working Group support, in principle, the proposed changes to services from December 2007, as detailed in the submitted report.

35. THANKS TO MEMBERS

The Chair thanked Members and officers for their contribution to the Working Group during the past year, as this was the last meeting of the group before the local elections.