

Rail North Committee Meeting – Minutes

Meeting: Rail North Committee
Date: Wednesday 8th January 2020 – 10.00 to 12.00
Venue: Hilton Leeds City, Magnum Suite, 4th Floor, Neville Street, Leeds, LS1 4BX

Attendees:

CLlr Liam Robinson (Chair)
Mayor Andy Burnham
CLlr Judith Blake
CLlr Don Mackenzie
CLlr Chris Brewis
CLlr Richard Hannigan
CLlr Keith Little
CLlr Heather Scott
CLlr Carl Marshall
CLlr Craig Browne

Liverpool City Region
Greater Manchester
West Yorkshire and York
North Yorkshire
East Midlands Authorities
Humber Authorities
Lancashire and Cumbria
Tees Valley
North East Authorities
Cheshire and Potteries

Support Officers

Barry White
David Hoggarth
Gary Bogan
Tobyn Hughes

Bob Morris

Noreen Slinger

TfN Chief Executive
TfN Strategic Rail Director
Rail North Partnership Director
TfN Rail North Partnership
Representative
TfN Rail North Partnership
Representative
Administrator – Transport for the
North

In attendance:

Louise Ebbs
Leo Goodwin
Steve Montgomery
Rob Warnes
Chris Burchell
Sam Caughey
Eddie Muraszko

TPE (Item 11)
TPE (item 11)
First (Item 11)
Northern (Item 11)
Arriva (Item 11)
DfT (Item 8)
DfT (Item 8)

Apologies:

Mayor Dan Jarvis

Sheffield City Region

1.0	Welcome and Apologies		Action
1.1	The chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies were noted.		
1.2	The Chief Executive explained that Grant Shapps was unable to attend the Board meeting later today due to parliamentary business.		
2.0	Declaration of Interest		
2.1	There were no declarations of interest.		
3.0	Minutes of the meeting on 5 November 2019		
3.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2019 were considered and their accuracy as a correct record confirmed. There were no issues arising from the minutes.		
	RESOLVED:	That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 th November 2019 be approved as a true and accurate record.	
4.0	Exclusion of Press and Public		
	RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of items 5.0, 6.0, 7.0 and 8.0 of business because it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, there will be disclosure of confidential information as defined in s100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and/or exempt Information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of The Local Government Act 1972		
5.0	Part 2 – Minutes of the meeting on 5 November 2019		
	The part 2 minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2019 were considered and their accuracy as a correct record confirmed. Members discussed any issues arising from the minutes.		
	RESOLVED:	That the part 2 minutes of the meeting held on 5 th November 2019 be approved	

	as a true and accurate record.		
6.0	Rail North Partnership Update		
6.1	The report was received by Members and they were invited to ask questions and make comments on the update.		
	RESOLVED:	1) That the report from Rail North Partnership be noted. 2) That the discussed recommendations be agreed.	
7.	Committee Input to franchise management decisions (r)		
7.1	The report was received by Members who were invited to ask questions and make comments		
	RESOLVED:	1) That the report be noted 2) That the discussed recommendations be agreed.	
8.0	Franchise strategy (v)		
	8.1	Members received a verbal update from the Department of Transport regarding the current situation relating to the franchise strategy. Following the updated Members were invited to ask questions.	
	RESOLVED:	That the update be noted.	
9.0	Press and public back in at 11.00 a.m.		
	9.1	The press and public returned to the meeting.	
	RESOLVED:		
10.0	Blake Jones Action Plan Update		
	10.1	Councillor Blake reported on the Blake Jones Action Plan. The planned meeting with ministers was postponed due to the general election. Councillor Blake will seek to arrange an urgent meeting with the Minister to ensure things move forward at pace. The interest of the travelling public needs to be put at the fore of everything that is done.	

	RESOLVED:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Rail North Committee notes progress on the Blake Jones Action Plan. 2. That the Committee agrees the revised dates for meetings in 2020 set out in Appendix 1 of the report. 	
11.0	Performance Update		
11.1	<p><u>TransPennine Express Update</u></p> <p>Steve Montgomery, First Group, apologised for the disruption caused to passengers and stakeholders and discussed the impact that the new trains had had on this. The CAF new trains should have been delivered in January 2018 however they didn't arrive until the summer. The second batch were due to arrive in March but were not received until Autumn whilst, the third batch from Hitachi arrived on time.</p> <p>Mr. Montgomery also explained that driver training has also contributed to the disruption. Additional resources have been provided by First Group to help TPE through the challenges.</p> <p>Leo Goodwin reported that the staff training introduction programme had been affecting delivery to customers. He explained that the compressed introduction of new trains following the delay in delivery, together with the issues associated with the roll out of training and the early technical unreliability of the CAF trains have been the biggest factors for the disruption. Members were informed that during the first week of the New Year, performance has started to stabilise compared to the end of last year and this has been helped by the amended timetable. It is understood that going forward new trains will be introduced into services and customers would be refunded for cancellations there was also a full commitment to putting things right for customers.</p>		
11.2	<p>Mayor Burnham questioned how the Committee can have confidence that TPE will deliver on their promises, and why no mitigation plan is in place.</p> <p>Mayor Burnham proposed to the committee that a series of public deadlines should be set for TPE to improve their performance.</p> <p>Mr. Goodwin stated that they are working to stabilise performance and return them to the levels of the first half of 2019.</p>		

11.3	<p>Councillor Scott, seconded Mayor Burnham’s recommendation. She stated that there had been no improvement and believed that it was necessary to give TPE a deadline. She also commented on the lack of communication to passengers when trains are delayed.</p> <p>Mr. Goodwin explained that it is their policy to inform passengers of any delays and apologised if this had not been happening.</p>	
11.4	<p>Councillor MacKenzie questioned the longstanding issue since taking on the franchise of trains on the York, Malton, Scarborough route. He explained that one of the options that has been considered is a shuttle service between Malton and Scarborough.</p> <p>Cllr MacKenzie questioned whether the late delivery of rolling stock could have been anticipated.</p> <p>Mr. Goodwin explained that it was the intention to provide a reliable and consistent service on this route. He stated that investment for new trains on this service had been made and that they are working on new contingency plans.</p> <p>In relation to the rolling stock, he explained that the CAF programme was moved on many occasions and therefore the introduction plans had to be reshaped in response to the performance and delivery. This impacted on the service and now it is about managing the delivery.</p>	
11.5	<p>The Chair commented about poor communication with the travelling public. He explained that there is a number of ways of keeping passengers updated and urged the industry to get more information to travellers.</p>	
11.6	<p><u>Northern Update</u></p> <p>Chris Burchell from Arriva provided an update on Northern. He informed Members that the company accepts that services on the Northern network are not yet good enough and apologised to all customers. He stated that services need to improve and that collectively the rail industry needs to address the key causes of the problems.</p> <p>Mr Burchell further stated that no one wants to see improvements in Northern’s performance and capacity more than Arriva.</p> <p>Mr. Burchell explained that some progress has been made, and they have delivered a very technically demanding</p>	

	<p>timetable change in a professional manner. He further explained that this has had to be done whilst introducing a significant number of new trains into service and taking the majority of pacers off the network and having enough drivers and train crew trained for requirements. This has all been done in a compressed timescale.</p> <p>Mr. Burchell acknowledged that since the timetable change there have been a number of other issues which have driven poor performance. He highlighted the continued problems with covering Sunday services due to inherited terms and conditions and unprecedented levels of short-term sickness in some of the driver depots. The train crew issues which were experienced in December were short term and since the turn of the year these have improved.</p> <p>He explained that Arriva remains committed to supporting Northern with additional expertise and resource. In terms of the strategic future, with the necessary infrastructure that was originally envisaged to be in place to support the timetable and the franchise plan, it seems that a new plan is now required if the North and customers in the North and city regions in the North are to grow and enjoy reliable railways in the future.</p> <p>Rob Warnes provided more detail on some of the recent challenges including introducing over half the total number of new trains (needing 11,000 days of train crew training), removing the majority of pacers and retaining the class 323 fleet to provide more capacity in the Manchester area.</p> <p>Mr. Warnes acknowledged that Sundays have been difficult in the North West and Northern have worked with ASLEF regarding the new proposal which is now out for ballot with the drivers. He explained that if the proposals are accepted this will put Northern in a much better position. He also highlighted the further role out of new trains planned from 17 February and a 6-car operation on the Bolton Corridor.</p>	
11.7	<p>Mayor Burnham discussed the effects of cancellations on the economy. He also stated that it is unacceptable that they took on a franchise for a seven day service, which they are not providing. He questioned whether Northern believed this was acceptable.</p> <p>Mr. Burchell agreed that this is not an acceptable service. He explained that the terms and conditions that were inherited when they took on the franchise did not require some drivers to work Sundays and this would be addressed with ASLEF and updated to include Sunday working.</p>	

	<p>Mayor Burnham raised concerns about reported safety system issues on the new trains. Mr. Warnes explained that they are aware of some specific issues and modifications are being implemented.</p> <p>Mayor Burnham enquired as to whether Northern believed they had the right/trust from the public to carry on providing services.</p> <p>Mr. Burchell agreed that the trust has been tested to the extreme and that the current plan that they are trying to deliver was there to drive more services on the network and these had a high dependency on what was happening elsewhere on the network. He explained that they are now running 2,000 more trains a week, however there are a number of areas where they are unable to fulfil their original promises due to lack of infrastructure These things were not part of the original plan and they are now being addressed.</p> <p>Mr. Burchell stated that the original franchise plan has become undeliverable and believed that no other operator could have made better decisions.</p>	
	<p>Councillor Hannigan questioned whether support will be provided to Northern to help them provide a better service in the future.</p> <p>Mr. Burchell explained that they are replacing old pacer trains with new trains and working with the manufacturer to ensure these trains are reliable. He stated that they need to make sure that there are the right plans in place and to know how to plan and deliver. He also stated that they need to make sure that the timetables match the capability and capacity and that Northern are provided with the right resources to operate.</p>	
11.8	<p>Councillor Browne questioned why bus services are considered an acceptable alternative to a rail service and why they are charging the fare for a rail services when they know in advance?</p> <p>Councillor Browne highlighted the issues on the Crewe-Manchester line over the Christmas period. Cancellations were pre-advised and publicised on the 24 and 27 December but this was not the case on Sunday 29 December where every service on the line was cancelled and there was no communication on this.</p> <p>Mr. Warnes explained that when they are unable to provide a rail service, a bus service is provided so passengers can still</p>	

	<p>make their journey. It is national policy that rail fares still apply when a replacement bus service is implemented.</p> <p>Mr. Warnes further apologised for the lack of communication when the trains were cancelled and explained that he would look into this.</p> <p>Mr. Burchell reiterated that there had been a bold set of infrastructure and service plans and not all of these had been delivered. He explained that there was now a need for a new plan and adjustment to services.</p>	
11.9	The Chair issued a warning to the operators. He explained that the public are sick and tired of poor performance, and that Transport for the North will set a public improvement target for TPE and apologies for operators' failures will no longer be accepted.	
	RESOLVED:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the performance updates be noted. 2) That TfN will develop a public improvement target for TPE.
12.0	Date of Next Meeting	
		To confirm the date of the next meeting: 12 th March 2020.