

Rail North Committee Meeting – Minutes

Meeting: Rail North Committee
Date: Thursday 12 September 2019, 10.00 – 12.00
Venue: Schiphol Suite, Hilton Manchester Airport

Attendees:

Cllr Liam Robinson (Chair)	Liverpool City Region
Cllr Carl Marshall	North East Authorities
Cllr Chris Brewis	East Midlands Authorities
Mayor Andy Burnham	Greater Manchester
Cllr Richard Hannigan	Humber Authorities
Cllr Keith Little	Lancashire & Cumbria
Cllr Don Mackenzie	North Yorkshire
Mayor Ben Houchen	Tees Valley
Cllr Judith Blake	West Yorkshire and York

Also in Attendance:

Barry White	TfN Chief Executive
Dawn Madin	TfN Director of Business Capabilities
David Hoggarth	TfN Strategic Rail Director
Gary Bogan	TfN Rail North Partnership Director
Tom Davidson	TfN Transport Planner
Tobyn Hughes	TfN Rail North Partnership Board Representative
Jim Bamford	TfN Head of Investment Planning
Anna-Jane Hunter	Network Rail (Director of North of England Rail)
Rob Warnes	Northern Rail (Performance & Planning Director)
Louise Ebbs	TransPennine Express (Strategy Director)

Apologies:

Cllr Trevor Ainsworth	East Midlands Authorities
Mayor Dan Jarvis	Sheffield City Region

1.0 Welcome and Apologies

Action

- 1.1 The chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and Members introduced themselves.

Apologies were noted.

2.0 Declaration of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3.0 Minutes of the meeting on 31 July 2019

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting on 31 July were considered and their accuracy as a correct record confirmed.

- 3.2 The Chief Executive explained that the industry is currently facing some major strategic issues as well as performance issues which has been very frustrating for Committee members – for example at the last meeting in July.

The Chief Executive stated that the Committee has had to deal with the decisions of the past and had these decisions been made locally, at the right time, then some of the issues being faced may have been better mitigated. This was the thrust of Blake Jones and also Williams which present opportunities for the North.

A letter has been sent to the Department for Transport in order to secure the resources needed for the Blake Jones plan.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 July 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 the items 5.0, 6.0 and 7.0 of business since it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of confidential information as defined in s100A(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

5.0 Blake Jones Review

5.1 A report on the Blake Jones Review Action Plan on the development of a strategic operating model for the interface between Elected Representatives and the Rail industry was considered. The report was discussed and noted.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the actions be agreed as discussed.

6.0 Rail North Partnership Update

6.1 The Rail North Partnership Update report was noted. Members were invited to ask questions and make comments on the update.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted
2. That the actions be agreed as discussed.

6.2 Timetable Planning Update

6.2.1 The Timetable Planning Update report was considered, and Members discussed various aspects of the report.

RESOLVED: 1. That the report be noted

6.3 Investment Planning Update

6.3.1 Members considered the Investment Planning report update.

6.3.2 Anna Jane Hunter Network Rail Director of North of England Rail outlined to Members where money had been spent. Members questioned her about spending on autumn resilience.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

7.0 Franchise Strategy

7.1 The Department for Transport presentation on franchise strategy was received by Members.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

The public were invited back into the meeting.

8.0 Williams Rail Review

- 8.1 The Strategic Rail Director presented the Williams Rail Review update. The report provided an update on Transport for the North's input to the Review and recommended that the Rail North Committee approve the submission.
- 8.2 It was reported that there needs to be a step change towards devolution and it was suggested that the North could be used to host some 'pilots' of new ways of working.
- 8.3 The Chair suggested that the report needed to be sharper and highlight the need for local choices.
- 8.4 Councillor Blake stated that she felt there was a lot to offer as a result of the recent journey. She felt that relationships would be key and how these are made simple and clear.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

9.0 Performance Update

- 9.1 A report by the Transport Planner, including the regular monthly performance update and a presentation from Anna-Jane Hunter, Rob Warnes and Louise Ebbs were considered.
- 9.2 Anna-Jane Hunter stated that performance isn't where she hoped it would be with poor weather conditions contributing to the performance levels during period 5. However, performance is showing improvements.
- 9.3 Louise Ebbs updated Members on TPE performance. She apologised for the disruption passengers had experienced as a result of the extreme weather, which caused 14% of their trains to be delayed and 40% cancelled.
- Driver availability as a result of training also played a part in the number of delays and cancellations. This is an ongoing challenge that they are facing, however driver training plans have been revised accordingly.

The TransPennine Express December 2019 timetable is building on the performance-led changes of December 2018.

Louise stated that performance is now improving and is back to 85% PPM.

9.4

Rob Warnes provided an update on Northern performance. He explained that the exceptional weather and the issues that it caused had placed a lot of stress on the system.

He apologised for not delivering the service that they should have done and outlined some of the issues that Northern have faced. The weather caused major issues and the issue with Whaley Bridge dam caused rolling stock shortages as the depot was isolated. Trains not going in for maintenance on time also led to them being out of action for longer.

There are currently 18 new trains in traffic and a further 20 on the way, however some of the new trains are not performing as well as they wanted. Driver training was continuing.

Northern have withdrawn some of their 142s from service however if required these can be reintroduced in order to increase resilience.

Northern recognised that their Sunday performance has not been good in the West and are working with ASLEF to try and resolve these issues.

Rob explained that they are introducing a new timetable in December as well as some additional services in Yorkshire and the North East.

Brand new stabling facilities are being introduced at Wigan and new siding at Ardwick. Neville Hill has become very congested. New stabling arrangements in the Leeds area were being introduced.

9.5

Anna-Jane updated Members on the work Network Rail has done in order to improve performance during the Autumn. She explained that she expected autumn performance to be better than last year as

there is an Autumn Plan in place which they have greater confidence in. A number of other actions have also been taken in order to mitigate against bad autumn weather.

A new haulage contract for autumn leaf treatment on the east side has been agreed, standby wheel lathe treatments and additional gel applicators are in place and £5 million has been spent on vegetation clearance. There are also new trains in operation and cryogenic rail head treatment is being trialled on the Blackpool line and if successful this may be used elsewhere in the future.

- 9.6 Mayor Burnham queried how much of the poor performance could be attributed to the bad weather and questioned what resilience the rail companies had in place. He asked the rail companies what percentage of the poor performance was down to them and what percentage was down to the weather.

Anna-Jane stated that some of the more extreme weather conditions that the country experiences can no longer be seen as exceptional and accepted that Network Rail weren't as prepared as they should have been. She was unable to provide Mayor Burnham with figures but said she would find out and get back to the Committee with an answer.

Anna-Jane re-stated Network Rail's commitment to investing in Wheel Slip Protection.

- 9.7 Rob Warnes from Northern was unable to provide figures for Mayor Burnham but stated that he would also get back to the committee.

He stated that over the summer when the weather conditions were exceptional they had also been training as many drivers as possible on the new trains that are being introduced, this coupled with annual leave had put pressure on the system. Mayor Burnham stated that they should have employed more drivers.

Mayor Burnham stated that it was their obligation to deliver these services and asked

if they were aware as to their contractual obligations. In response Rob Warnes explained that they did not know that the trains were going to be as late as they were.

9.8

Councillor Judith Blake explained that local authorities have a responsibility for delivering front line services 24 hours a day 365 days a year, just like the rail companies, however local authorities need to ensure they have resilience built into their plans in order that they can do this and this is something that the rail companies also need to take into account.

Councillor Blake raised the issue of training and stated that it is an issue that has been going on for a long time.

The accuracy of the train operating companies' figures regarding the number of passengers being left on platforms was questioned. Councillor Blake stated that she did not feel that the figures were accurate as they have had officers from the local authorities out counting.

Councillor Blake also asked when the longer trains would be ready. Rob stated that these will be ready by the end of the year with more due to be commissioned in the spring and into the summer.

In response to passenger counting equipment Rob stated that the equipment is more than 10 years old and they don't get live data around counting number on trains. Therefore, they are looking to use CCTV cameras to see how many are being left behind. It is hoped that as they go through next year they will be able to get more accurate figures. The new trains will have retro-fitted cameras which will be completed toward the back end of next year

9.9

After looking at the figures the Chair suggested that 20% of the issues were as a result of the weather and 80% were down to the rail service providers.

Anna Jane disagreed with this and stated that other things needed to be considered that also impacted.

- 9.10 Councillor Blake raised the issue of tree removal adjacent to railway lines to prevent vegetation falling on to the tracks. Councillor Blake queried if they had an obligation to replace the trees removed elsewhere and the quantity they have to replace them with.
- Anna-Jane explained that this is not her area of expertise but would check and get back to the committee.
- 9.11 The Chair questioned the rail companies if they were confident that they weren't going to have another bad autumn.
- The representatives explained that that they have more and extensive plans in place this year and they have learnt the lessons from last year. Plans have been produced to mitigate against problems this year.
- Anna-Jane stated that she can't guarantee that they're not going to have a bad day or week with the weather but explained that they feel better prepared in terms of plans than they did last year.
- 9.12 The Chair stated that he hoped that when the Committee meets again in November that the rail operators have done everything in power to ensure they have not had a bad autumn.

10.0 Date of the Next Meeting

- RESOLVED:** That the next Committee will be held on Tuesday 5 November 2019 from 14.00 to 16.00 venue to be confirmed [subsequently confirmed as Leeds Civic Hall].