

Northern Trains Update

Rail North Committee 12th May 2020

Agenda

- The current position
- Post Covid-19 restoration of services
- Progress on the Northern trains 100-day Plan.
- Progress of the Performance Recovery Task Force
- Stakeholder Engagement

Current Position

- DOHL took ownership control of Northern on 1st March. Rail North Committee on 12th March but within days everything changed.
- All normal Train Company life is on hold. Emergency Measures Agreements for all the privately owned Franchises to ensure service continuity.
- Massive bill being carried by Treasury to cover loss of income.
- Currently operating a special “Key Worker” timetable. This has been added to and “tweaked” to respond to requests and local requirements
- Train Performance is a best ever 96% T-3. Fewer trains (circa 50%), fewer problems but fewer passengers.
- Scale of this timetable driven was partially by “demand” and partially by “supply”. In particular traincrew availability.
- Excellent co-operation and liaison with the North of England Contingency Working Group and with other authorities. Excellent liaison with regional and local officers on local requirements.

Increasing service level

- Northern Trains services cover multiple markets and geographies – Service requirements for “Schools and/or construction workers” would look different from “city commuters” – the peaks are different.
- Agreed service objectives are critical to plan TT design and structure. Local services to take priority over long distance services?
- Social distancing rules will have a profound impact on capacity and therefore on service design. There are no easy mechanisms for volume management either on train or at stations.
- We will not put our staff into an unsafe working situation – we are in agreement with the trade unions on this. This applies to all staff whether they are train crew, station, depot or office staff.
- Increased services on (18th) May assumes an increase to the current special timetable (raising to circa 65%) – restoration to full timetable is very different.
- We still have a significant staff availability challenge.

Restoration of Full timetable

- There is potentially a different railway in future from pre-Covid-19. Great uncertainty regarding passenger demand and capacity requirements.
- Restoration of a “Full Timetable” is in effect the introduction of the full new May 2020 timetable (or a variant of it). However, few of the pre-conditions for new timetable introduction are in place.
- Whilst the full May 2020 timetable plan is agreed, successful implementation is dependent upon everything else being in place too – as we saw in May 2018.
- The Northern May 2020 TT needs New trains, the associated Traincrew training, system changes, wholesale fleet and traincrew diagram and roster changes and necessary consultation with the Trade Unions on all this.
- None of the training has been able to continue during social distancing
- New train delivery stopped during Lockdown
- We will have significant staff shortages which will continue to affect training and staff rosters for many weeks.
- Moving all this into a “ready” position is a process that would take around 12-14 weeks in normal circumstances. Situation different in some other TOCs.
- We will not repeat May 2018 – the re-introduction of the full timetable will not be rushed. NTL will not promise delivery until it is safe and confident to do so.

Northern 100-Day Plan Update

- Post change of ownership is always a difficult period for a Franchise team.
- The team at Northern has worked through some exceptionally difficult circumstances over the last two months – with outstanding results.
- Significant additional workload – new working arrangements, plus planning and introduction of special timetables.
- In the background progress has still been made on the 100-day Plan – albeit in a slightly different shape from that which was first envisaged.
- Covid-19 has changed the short and medium term landscape – far less certainty. Makes the creation of a traditional Business Plan very difficult.
- Inevitably has become less of a “Business Plan” and more of a “Prospectus” for moving forward.
- Apart from Covid-19 disruption there are some senior personnel changes in the pipeline

Strategic Direction is Clear

- The ambition is to re-establish Northern Trains as a trusted partner in the North and as an important vehicle for growth and social coherence.
- We have encouraged ambition in the Planning – to lift Northern’s goals up from the day-to-day operation to fulfil its wider potential.
- Focus on people, performance, customers, stakeholders and investment in sustainable growth – to make this a modern railway for the people of the North.
- Planning has involved consultation throughout the Management and also front-line Staff for their ideas and their thoughts. Very different from a Franchise Bid which is “passed down”.
- This has resulted in over 80 initiatives being worked on
- Some significant business cases are being drafted as part of this work.
- Consultation has continued with all the Authorities and through the TfN Officers Reference Group

- But Covid has caused a re-think on the overall Plan structure:
 - The Northern Prospectus will have three phases:
 - Phase 1. Post Covid Recovery.
 - Phase 2. To December 2021 – timetable restructuring to get Northern back on track, implement the plans being developed and re-build the confidence and trust in the business
 - Phase 3: Ambitious Plan for sustainable Long-term Growth across the business.

Priority Issues in the NTL Prospectus

- A clear priority focus on People, Performance for Customers, Partners and stakeholders, and investment in long term sustainable growth.

Regardless of any Covid or other issues the following will be in the Plan:

- The fundamental focus on getting the basics right to ensure that the train plan is delivered for customers punctually and with resilience - every day.
- The introduction of the new trains – as soon as possible, but without detriment to the service.
- The final removal of the Pacers.
- A plan for the trains we need in the future as well as the stabling and maintenance for them
- A renewed emphasis on staff and their working environment
- A re-focussed management ability to respond quickly to rapidly changing circumstances.
- Re-constructed relationships with Partners, Stakeholders and Communities that Northern serves to rebuild our reputation.

- This will also need a re-structured and re-visited timetable that is planned around reliable performance for the passenger.
- NTL are therefore working very closely with the Performance Recovery Task Force to ensure plans are in sync.

Performance Recovery Task Force

- The work of the Recovery Task Force led by Network Rail is key to achieving a passenger performance led timetable.
- The Task Force has made short term recommendations for December 2020 which reduce the number of trains on the Castlefield Corridor – as well as looking at some possible Post Covid alterations on services to the Airport.
- Medium term changes are being looked at for a re-structured timetable in December 2021 – which will be the first performance-led timetable in the North
- Key principles are being developed to ensure that the capacity is used well – all with service reliability at its core.
- Session with TfN Rail Officers and members on 27th April
- As part of the 100-day process, recommendations on Strategic direction to be set out during 2020 for December 2021.
- This is the start of the process – to design options and make recommendations for change. The normal timetable processes will still apply.
- Timetable “bidding” doesn’t take place until next year – subject to all the usual discussion and consultation through the timetable bidding process.
- Everyone recognizes the need for change - but change will bring us all some challenges.

Performance Recovery Task Force

- This work, whilst focussed on Castlefield Corridor affects the whole of the North
- We need to ensure these Timetable re-structuring plans and the Infrastructure development work fit at a Strategic Level with ALL the other Infrastructure Projects;
- Hope Valley Upgrade
- Trans-Pennine Route Upgrade
- East Coast Mainline Upgrade
- And in the long-term NPR and HS2 development
- Part of the Task Force work is also assessing the Infrastructure Options for Castlefield Corridor capacity. Review undertaken by Network Rail sponsor team building on prior Manchester Corridor work and with new developments.
- Some potential interventions noted for early development e.g. platform extensions for longer trains

Alignment of the NTL Prospectus and Task Force work together provide:

- The Performance Recovery Task Force work is in sync with the NTL plan – we need both
- A differently structured performance-led timetable being developed which is a “Rail industry” solution
- Short term interventions and longer-term structural change
- The aim is to increase overall passenger carrying capacity but with increased reliability
- Infrastructure and fleet proposals to support reliability and growth
- A rail industry set of solutions – led by Network Rail and DfT and all TOCs are affected not just Northern Trains
- Reliable operation by NR, Reliable operation by NTL
- Reliable service for passengers

Stakeholder Engagement

- Rail North Committee and TfN Board with all the Authorities present – remain the primary consultation bodies for NTL
- MPs and Metropolitan Leaders - we will stay in touch with individually
- Stakeholder Panel was planned for transitional arrangements – appreciate it caused concern regarding the composition of membership and potential for overlap with RNC – overtaken by events, must not overlap
- Covid has shown we need to consult widely and more locally
- There are some voices not heard through our RNC/TfN engagement – looking into “more Local” and less Big-City centred arrangements – perhaps 4 groups (NE, NW, SE, SW) of the region.
- eg Transport Users, Tourism bodies, CBI Regional Reps, Community Railways, Chambers of Commerce, with some local representatives
- Separate Northern Accessibility User Group for its specific focus
- Open engagement to ensure we get it right