



# Passenger Focus' response to Network Rail's Northern Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation

January 2011

Passenger Focus is the official, independent consumer organisation representing the interests of rail users nationally and bus, coach and tram users across England outside London. Created by the Railways Act 2005, Passenger Focus is the operating name of the Passengers' Council. We are funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) and our independence is guaranteed by an act of Parliament.

Our mission is to get the best deal for passengers. We have two main aims: to influence both long and short-term decisions and issues that affect passengers; and to help passengers through advice, advocacy and empowerment.

With a strong emphasis on evidence-based campaigning and research, we ensure that we know what is happening on the ground. We use our knowledge to influence decisions on behalf of passengers and we work with the industry, passenger groups and Government to secure journey improvements.

Our vision is to ensure that operators, funders and regulators of transport systems and Government are always

**‘putting passengers first’**

This will be achieved through our mission of

**‘getting the best deal for passengers’**

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## 1. Executive summary

The number of people travelling by rail continues to increase. Passenger journeys within the three Government Office Regions<sup>1</sup> that comprise most of the area covered by the Northern Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS) have grown by 92% over the ten years 1998/9 to 2008/9. Journeys between those regions and the rest of Great Britain grew by 48.5%<sup>2</sup>. Performance on the railways has steadily improved and passenger satisfaction is rising. In 2009/10 Northern Rail's Public Performance Measure<sup>3</sup> (PPM) was 91.6% within 5 minutes; TransPennine Express's PPM was 92.2% within 10 minutes<sup>4</sup> of on-time. Passenger Focus expects the programme of RUSs across the rail network to build on this; to allow for continued passenger growth, to further improve performance and to improve passenger satisfaction.

The RUS objective is defined as "*The effective and efficient use and development of the capacity available, consistent with funding that is, or is reasonably likely to become, available during the period of the RUS and with the licence holder's performance of the duty*<sup>5</sup>." We note this, and how the current economic situation and the McNulty Review of value for money in the rail industry will have an impact on railway spending plans.

Stakeholders have given us the view that there is disparity between spending on the railway network in London and the South East and in the North. Crossrail, Thameslink and the remodelling at Reading are all quoted as evidence of that disparity. The forecast growth in passenger demand across the Northern conurbations is 5% per annum; the railway network in the North will need significant investment to meet that demand.

The last decade has seen a very large rise in demand for travel by rail across the North. It was preceded by several decades during which a mixture of neglect, uncoordinated modernisation and inconsistent funding and policy left the railway network ill-prepared to meet the large growth in passenger numbers. Changes in society and passengers' expectations are also driving big changes in what the passenger rail network in the North is required to deliver.

Economic growth across the North of England, job creation and an improved focus on leisure and social opportunities will be supported by a railway in the RUS area that provides adequate capacity for passengers: fast, reliable journeys, and attractive stations that have the facilities passengers expect nowadays.

Passenger Focus has a wealth of research material regarding what passengers want, and adds to this as the RUS programme rolls out across the network. This

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<sup>1</sup> North East, North West, Yorkshire and The Humber.

<sup>2</sup> National Rail Trends 2009 - 10 Yearbook: ORR.

<sup>3</sup> PPM is the timekeeping measure of the trains booked to run.

<sup>4</sup> 86.8% within 5 minutes.

<sup>5</sup> Extract from Network Licence Condition 1, April, 2009.

evidence informs our input to specific RUS consultations at route level. Drivers of passenger satisfaction change over time, but punctuality and reliability have been the main drivers of passenger satisfaction since the National Passenger Survey (NPS) began in 1999. Issues such as frequency of train services, connections with other train services and facilities for car parking, have also been clear factors in overall satisfaction ratings. Passenger Focus expects RUSs to address the link between passenger satisfaction and the development of capacity.

Our submission includes evidence based on comprehensive research with 3,181<sup>6</sup> passengers, looking from the passenger viewpoint at fares, satisfaction and wider rail issues. Passenger Focus carried out passenger research for the previous RUSs that have covered parts of the North: The numbers surveyed were:

- North West (2007) 2,518
- Lancashire and Cumbria (2008) 2,498
- Yorkshire and Humber (2008) 3,582

In addition, Passenger Focus has surveyed passengers for these RUSs, which also consider routes in the North:

- East Coast Main Line (2007)
- East Midlands (2009)
- West Coast Main Line (2011)

The latest NPS, for spring 2010, shows that passengers' satisfaction with issues covered by the Draft RUS varies widely. While issues such as punctuality and journey time are rated reasonably highly, others are not so satisfactory, and some, especially capacity ("room to sit/stand"), are especially poorly rated.

**Table 1: National Passenger Survey Spring 2010 passenger satisfaction**

Issue	% fairly, very satisfied	
	Northern Rail	TransPennine Express
Frequency	75	84
Punctuality/reliability	83	84
Journey time	87	89
Room to sit/stand	70	66
Rail connections	72	76
Station: access to other transport	69	75
Car parking	50	50

Consequently passengers will want to know what the RUS offers to those who use the railway – and those who pay for it. Do the options provide benefits? Do they offer

<sup>6</sup> Northern: 1,633 passengers; TPE: 1,548 passengers - for the National Passenger Survey Spring 2010.

solutions to difficulties or shortcomings in the present service? Will they match passengers' priorities and:

- improve punctuality
- increase capacity
- increase frequencies
- increase connectivity
- increase reliability

Passengers will want to know how the proposals identified in the Draft RUS will be prioritised, delivered and funded. If the RUS is to avoid becoming just another planning document that sits on the shelf it needs to provide a mechanism for taking forward its longer term requirements and it must include an estimate of costings, when the work might be done, and possible sources of funding.

## 2. Recommendations

Our key recommendations for inclusion in the final RUS are:

- options that provide the maximum amount of capacity to address both current needs and future growth forecasts
- options that can be phased to match demand as it grows
- options that identify potential opportunities for improvements in capacity and line speeds arising from infrastructure renewals
- options that meet passengers' aspirations for greater frequency and more reliable evening and weekend services
- options that drive a real step-change in improved passenger services in terms of journey times
- options that maintain existing connections
- options that increase connectivity in the North
- options to improve access to, and facilities at, stations
- options that can be integrated with other proposals for social and economic development in the region.

### 3. Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Northern Route Utilisation Strategy Draft for Consultation ('the Draft RUS'). Passenger Focus supports the broad objectives behind the RUS process, and welcomes both the formal, and informal, consultative approach adopted by Network Rail.

Passenger Focus believes that the RUS is a vital component to inform the implementation of the Network RUS, rollout of the electrification programme, Northern Hub interventions, Merseyside Long-Term Planning Study and the programme of Local Transport Plans (LTPs). We note that the LTPs are due in April, 2011, around the same time as the final publication of the Northern RUS.

We are pleased that the electrification of lines in the Liverpool - Manchester - Preston triangle will go ahead. It will drive significant improvements in terms of capacity and services. However, we also understand there are practicalities around funding some of the other proposed RUS options.

Passenger Focus understands, and supports, the approach taken by RUSs in the way they assess interventions. Simpler, lower cost ones, typically timetabling changes, or small infrastructure changes on the back of renewals, permitting a more reliable service; can often produce genuine improvements. Their low cost and small scale can ensure they can be implemented more quickly and easily. Possibly more important in the current economic climate is the fact that they are more likely to be fundable. Whilst they might not have the glamour and huge impact of large-scale schemes, taken forward steadily as parts of a properly staged programme, they can provide huge benefits for large numbers of passengers. Expensive and complex schemes can cause considerable disruption to the railway and bring its passengers months, even years, of inconvenience. However, that disruption will have to be faced, because there are parts of the railway network in the North - in Manchester and Leeds especially - where the Draft RUS shows that such schemes will become necessary.

The Draft RUS "sets out the priorities for rail investment in the north of England for the next 20 years<sup>7</sup>". However, there is no commentary on the potential opportunities for capacity and line speed improvements that might arise from infrastructure renewals. Nearly 50% of Network Rail's authorised expenditure in the current control period is on infrastructure renewals. In terms of value for money and the wider expectation that passengers should fund investment through the fare box, we suggest this area should be prioritised and made transparent through the RUS process.

Incremental improvements, such as higher line speeds, platform lengthening and network capability, can be achieved by ensuring the best use is made of the opportunities for synergies between renewals and improvements. Passenger Focus

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<sup>7</sup> Op. cit. page 3.

believes that it is essential that a coherent approach is taken so that proposals are analysed on a line of route basis, thereby maximising benefits. Consequently it is vital that all schemes linked in such a way are completed in order. The effectiveness of an intervention would be destroyed if one scheme is deferred or cancelled.

Our response to this consultation is informed by liaison with stakeholders and user groups, our postbag, existing research, and the National Passenger Survey (NPS). As an evidence-based organisation, Passenger Focus's responses to RUS consultations all incorporate research with passengers. This response uses previous surveys for the North West, Lancashire and Cumbria, and Yorkshire and Humber RUSs, with a total of 8,598 completed questionnaires. It also uses research with 3,181<sup>8</sup> passengers on the two Train Operating Companies (TOCs) based in the region - Northern Rail and TransPennine Express. In addition, passengers on trains operated by all the TOCs which operate services in the region - Arriva Trains Wales, CrossCountry, East Coast, East Midlands Trains, Grand Central, Merseyrail and Virgin Trains - have been interviewed.

Passengers' priorities for improvements<sup>9</sup> in those aspects of rail services directly affected by RUSs are summarised in the following table, which shows the ranking passengers gave to issues.

**Table 2: Passengers' priorities for improvements March 2010**

Issue	Government region		
	North East	North West	Yorkshire & the Humber
Value for money	1	1	1
Punctuality/reliability	2	2	2
Frequency	3	3	4
Room to sit/stand	6	4	3

<sup>8</sup> ibid. footnote 2

<sup>9</sup> Passengers' priorities for improvements in rail services: Passenger Focus, 2010.

## 4. General Comments

### 4.1. Scope and planning context

As a 'second generation' RUS, the Northern RUS has a remit to see where major changes have occurred, or will occur, to affect the recommendations made in relevant earlier RUSs, and assess interventions to fill any new gaps identified. The period up to 2024 is the first concern, but some interventions for up to 30 years' time have been assessed.

The RUS therefore has an important synthesising role in gathering together options from all the preceding RUSs that have covered areas of the North. Six such RUSs have been undertaken and established over the period May 2007 to October 2009.

They are:

- East Coast Main Line
- Lancashire and Cumbria
- Merseyside
- North West
- Yorkshire and Humber
- the Freight RUS.

Two parts of the Network RUS have also been established, the Electrification Strategy and Scenarios and Long Distance Forecasts.

It is vital that the interventions from those RUSs are analysed in several differing ways:

- from the passengers' point of view to see how closely they match needs and aspirations
- to ensure that they link to provide the necessary overall increase in capacity and capability of the region's railway network *as a whole*
- to ensure they allocate network capacity in the way that best matches demand and resources and funding available
- to confirm they are still valid responses in the overall context of the North's socio-economic geography.

So it is reassuring to note that the Draft RUS has attempted to do that; appendix A lists over 170 gaps from those RUSs that have been reviewed during its development.

In the following sections our response comments on how well we believe the Draft RUS has performed that analysis.

### 4.2. Forecast changes in demand

There has undoubtedly been large growth over recent years, see table 3<sup>10</sup> for some examples.

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<sup>10</sup> Station usage 0809: ORR Excel file.

**Table 3: Passenger demand comparison**

Gap		Passengers		% change
		2008/9	2007/8	
3	Morley	269,686	178,203	51.34
3	Dewsbury	1,247,872	875,135	42.59
3	Mirfield	260,198	185,410	40.34
3	Deighton	44,116	32,253	36.78
3	Huddersfield	3,565,582	2,672,469	33.42
5	Chapelton	264,296	191,327	38.14
5	Elsecar	122,854	93,538	31.34
5	Barnsley	1,319,512	875,736	50.67
5	Penistone	124,106	95,664	29.73
5	Denby Dale	136,016	105,998	28.32

Economists have been struggling to explain what has been driving the higher than expected growth in rail passenger numbers. No one can disagree with this statement in the Draft RUS<sup>11</sup>: “The challenge is to understand the drivers of rail demand....and to project these drivers into the future.” More expensive city-centre car parking and more office-based employment are considered to be important drivers. However, cultural changes also appear to be playing a part, with more people seeing the advantages of travelling, and especially commuting, by rail. Drivers of growth such as those can operate independently of overall economic performance.

Table 3.5 in the Draft RUS has a large range in forecast increases in peak travel to the five Northern cities of Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield. Translating the percentage figures into actual numbers shows that some of the highest forecasts could result in huge demands on the capability of the railway network. The high forecast for Manchester in 2029 is for 72% growth. Assuming that growth will be evenly spread over the peak period it would mean, to give one example, that *ten*-car trains will be required on the route from Preston. Currently some trains on that line are six cars long and already full; the Draft RUS assesses (page 50) the ability of the route to cater for eight-car trains and notes that platform lengthening will be required. It should be noted that even the low growth forecast - 37% - would result in eight-car trains being loaded beyond capacity.

There has been enormous financial and economic turmoil over the past two years. Economists are still divided as to whether the recession is over, or will return if public spending reductions reduce economic demand and employment. The forecasts in the Draft RUS commence in 2009; we are now effectively two years (10%) into the full period of projection. An overlay of the *actual* demand would verify the accuracy of the forecasting methodology to date. It would assist in determining the validity of the forecasts and could inform any additional or reducing gaps.

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<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. page 24.

The complexity of modelling demand is compounded by the huge number of individual flows; each one of which can be influenced differently by any number of factors. Factors include employment opportunities, housing, demographic changes, road building, station improvements, new stations and line of route improvements.

Despite the uncertainties inherent in devising accurate forecasts, it is of prime importance in developing plans for RUSs to avoid the waste of too much capacity or the waste of too little capacity. Therefore, wherever possible, a phased sequence of projects to increase capacity as demand increases should be the preferred approach to developing the strategy for the Northern RUS.

### **4.3. Emerging strategy**

#### **4.3.1 Principles**

Passenger Focus comments in this section of our response on rolling stock and stations, two of the aspects of the North's railway network that matter most to passengers.

#### **Rolling stock**

The Draft RUS has to make assumptions about the availability of rolling stock that are difficult to accept because of the uncertainty that has surrounded the Rolling Stock Plan published by the DfT in January 2008. An announcement recently by the government about its spending plans for rail included a few details regarding rolling stock. The subject has exercised analysts in the railway press for years. Rolling stock is a major consideration in many of the Draft RUS's recommended options - "...final capacity solutions will be dependent on the rolling stock strategy..." (page 83).

The "HLOS 1300" plan covered up to 2014 and included vehicles that would be made available by the introduction of new trains elsewhere, rather than just new trains. The recent plans run up to 2019 and focus on new trains. None of the additional vehicles listed in the 2008 plan for TransPennine Express have been ordered. Northern has received an "additional" 10 vehicles - five Class 142 units that were used on the Oldham Loop, and only available because that line has been closed for conversion to tram operation.

The lack of clarity is extremely worrying for passengers, who have been told to expect fare increases to help pay for new trains at a time when none are on order, and overcrowding continues to grow.

Passenger Focus is further concerned to note that some of the options (e.g. 3.3) suggest adding one additional vehicle to selected trains, or using trains formed of multiples of three, rather than four, vehicles (e.g. gap 7). It appears that the additional capacity required to cater for the forecast growth has been calculated, but no attempt has been made to predict how that capacity could be provided. For example, one

way four-car trains on TPE could be provided would be by operating two two-car Class 170 Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs). However, such units are not currently available.

The Lancashire Triangle electrification will obviously require electric trains. Plans are for them to be the Class 319 trains used on the Thameslink route through London, for which new trains will be provided. Those new trains have not yet been ordered. The Draft RUS notes that a mix of three- and four-car trains will need to be operated to match demand, and that the DfT is “currently investigating this” (page 51). The Class 319 trains are four cars in length, with around 300 seats, approximately the same as two Class 156 trains, and a hundred more than two Class 142 trains provide.

The eventual need to replace rolling stock as it becomes life-expired will drive the need to consider further electrification; one factor to consider being the fact it can offer better value for money when the whole-life costs of assets are taken into account.

Passenger Focus suggests that the Northern RUS should create a detailed plan of how much additional rolling stock its interventions require, showing when, where, how much.

- when - the date from which additional capacity is required, how the best synergies can be achieved in terms of providing new and/or additional vehicles
- where - the analysis must study how the routes that need additional capacity/additional services rank, how they can best be fitted into an overall strategy, and which routes can make best use of the improved performance that could be provided by new rolling stock
- reconfiguring - can any existing vehicles be redesigned to provide more capacity
- how much - the mixture of how many vehicles are required, and how many vehicles should form each train
- cascades - can any rolling stock replaced (for example by electrification) be used on other routes, and could any existing fleets be swapped around to be better used on different routes.

## **Stations**

Appendix B in the Draft RUS lists 23 stations at which there are capacity problems, but 12 have ‘no planned intervention’ in the ‘Proposed solutions’ column. Both of Bradford’s two stations are included in the list with peak egress as the issue. Meadowhall station has access restrictions at times of highest demand; Salford Central’s excessively low platforms delay trains because passengers find it difficult to join/leave trains. Passengers at such stations will not understand why no action is being proposed to improve them.

Passenger Focus is pleased that the Draft RUS notes<sup>12</sup> the need to maximise the accessibility of stations and how they and the surrounding local urban area relate in terms of access, which will be achieved by Network Rail working together with the TOCs, Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) and local authorities. Wakefield Kirkgate is a particular example of this, with the scale of the need and problems described in the report 'Wakefield Kirkgate Railway Station conservation management plan consultation draft'<sup>13</sup>. Station Travel Plan initiatives such as the successful pilots currently underway at a number of stations, including Accrington, Chapelton and Durham should be devised for many more of the stations in the Northern RUS area.

#### **4.3.2 Short-term strategy to 2014**

The end of Control Period 4 (CP4) in 2014 is the baseline for the Northern RUS; nearly two years of that period have already gone, with a lengthy list of projects either only just started or still in the planning stages. In the latter comes the plan for improved services between East Lancashire and Manchester, which requires the reinstatement of the curve at Todmorden to provide a direct link between Burnley Manchester Road station and Todmorden, Rochdale and Manchester. Additional rolling stock will be required to operate the services proposed.

One of the most serious issues relating to the projects due for completion by the end of CP4 is the amount of rolling stock that will be available. The Draft RUS states<sup>14</sup> "the number of additional vehicles available for services in the north of England is likely to be significantly less than was expected prior to the start of CP4". However, we are concerned to note that half of the train service changes in the "expected" strategy for CP4 require additional rolling stock.

Passenger Focus believes that the uncertainty surrounding the delivery of additional rolling stock, whether it be new, cascaded or re-allocated, is the greatest challenge facing the railways of the North of England. Until the industry is allowed to develop a strategic plan for rolling stock there is little else that can be planned with confidence. Infrastructure changes such as platform lengthening, enhanced depot facilities, increased network capacity - all are interdependent on where, how much and what type of rolling stock will be operated.

#### **4.3.3 Medium-term strategy 2014-2024**

This builds on what is in place at the end of CP4, and "assumes that any schemes or service changes.....not undertaken in CP4 will be added to the strategy for the medium term"<sup>15</sup>. Passenger Focus is reassured by that, but is also very concerned that there will be so much to achieve in CP5 that it will be impossible to implement all

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<sup>12</sup> Op. cit. page 87.

<sup>13</sup> Purcell Miller Tritton LLP, August 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Page 87.

<sup>15</sup> Op. cit. page 89

the interventions included in the Draft RUS. Further train lengthening is described as the “general approach” and additional rolling stock is “a continuing need”. However, the situation regarding rolling stock will be compounded by the fact that mid-way through the medium-term, 2019, much of the existing fleet of diesel trains will be thirty or more years old.

Passenger Focus agrees with the Draft RUS when it describes the mid-life overhauls required by some of the fleet as an opportunity for improvements, especially in terms of attractiveness to passengers. The refurbishment of much rolling stock has refreshed it to the extent that it appears new to passengers. Mechanically, there is only so much that can be done. Once again, we must reiterate our concern that a proper rolling stock strategy is essential. We support the statement that a progressive build of new build and/or refurbishment of trains is part of the strategy.

Indeed, there is little to argue about in the lists of train service changes and infrastructure projects contained in section 5.4 of the Draft RUS. The difficulty is to avoid being an Oliver Twist and asking for more. Some of the train service changes are major and will require thorough and transparent consultation with passengers. The impact of the electrification in Lancashire, especially on the service pattern on the major Preston - Bolton - Manchester corridor, will be to bring big opportunities to create a step-change in the attractiveness of rail.

We concur with the statement that the timing of projects will depend on the rate of growth and the funding available. As stated elsewhere, projects must be progressively reviewed to ensure that they are updated as necessary to ensure that they remain fit for purpose despite changing circumstances. The Draft RUS notes that need, and states that analysis will be necessary to “understand better the relationships shown, and to produce a robust staged implementation plan<sup>16</sup>”.

Tram-train operation on the Continent continues to increase; Mulhouse in France began operations on a new route in December 2010. It is the first such operation in Mulhouse, which has a population of circa 280,000 in the metropolitan area. The project was agreed at the end of November 2005, when the 2010 opening date was announced. It is regrettable that the tram-train project has been subject to repeated delays, re-specification and uncertainty. Passenger Focus hopes for a prompt resolution of the problems. The Draft RUS uses the phrase “Subject to a successful operation of tram-train in South Yorkshire”, which expresses a degree of uncertainty in relation to this project. That is unfortunate, given the potential for tram-train to provide solutions.

Tram-train is suggested by the Draft RUS as one option to help create additional capacity in Leeds station, which during the period covered by the medium-term strategy will become a major constraint in capacity terms, affecting the ability of the network in West Yorkshire to deal with passenger growth. The route east from Leeds

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<sup>16</sup> Op. cit. page 91.

through Micklefield is already becoming a constraint, with measures such as adding local stops to busy inter-city services being proposed. It is clear that other parts of the railway in the North are also becoming extremely full, and additional services proposed to cater for growth will further exacerbate matters as years pass.

#### **4.3.4 Long-term context**

If passenger traffic does indeed double in the thirty years from 2007, the railway will have major problems accommodating that much traffic on some routes. There are routes now where six-car trains are full; if platform extensions to cater for twelve-car trains are not possible additional trains would be the only alternative, but many routes do not have sufficient paths available in the timetable. Other routes, and not just rural ones, have two-car trains running hourly. Obviously capacity on such routes is not going to be a problem, even if passenger numbers do double. However, on routes such as these there could be problems providing platform or even track space if they run from a major station. The Morecambe to Leeds service is one that could be affected if access had to be “rationed”.

A major problem that will have to be solved as part of the long-term planning is the need for the proposed network of high speed routes to access city centres. Although the high speed network would remove many inter-city services from the existing network and create capacity for other services to grow, its need to serve the centre of cities may create problems of access for other services, which will need addressing.

If the high speed trains are to use existing stations, and if we are to take full advantage of the larger loading gauge possible on new lines - for example, to run double-deck trains - major infrastructure changes will be required. In addition, high speed trains are proposed to be longer, and they will also require access over a network that will be full. Expanding existing stations such as Leeds or Manchester Piccadilly will be very disruptive. One potential solution, which would also offer major opportunities for local and inter-urban services, would be to build new stations for some of those services, to create space in the existing city-centre stations for use by high speed services.

Such long-term considerations are not directly relevant to today’s passengers, or even to those planning the railway that will operate in CP5. They are indirectly relevant to the planners and funders of the railway because they are part of the matrix of issues that must inform the industry’s understanding of how it should develop plans to cater for the demand that will exist for its services. Another major part of that matrix of issues is the validity of forecasts - economic and passenger demand. Passenger Focus agrees with the statement that “It will therefore be important periodically to update the industry’s understanding of the need for further investment in the light of growth to that point in time and updated demand forecasts<sup>17</sup>.”

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<sup>17</sup> Op. cit. page 93.

Passenger Focus has stated at many points in its response that plans, delivery and demand must be continually reviewed to ensure that they reflect the actual situation in the real world and provide the best possible outcomes for passengers and stakeholders.

## 5. Analysis of options

### 5.1 Option 1.1 Chat Moss services

We agree with the conclusion that additional services on the route between Liverpool Lime Street and Manchester via Earlestown (the Chat Moss route) would not alleviate overcrowding on the services on the route via Warrington Central (the CLC route). Capacity on the Chat Moss route itself will be increased after electrification, when it is planned that four-car trains will be standard.

### 5.2 Options 1.2 to 1.5 additional capacity on peak CLC services

Overcrowding on this route is acute; passengers expect a solution that is prompt and effective. The services operated by East Midlands Trains and TransPennine Express are more attractive than Northern's for several reasons:

- they are faster, with fewer stops
- the trains used are newer, or have been refurbished
- (mostly) they provide more seats.

Because of those factors, and the fact that the trains are providing longer-distance links, they are often badly overcrowded. One train each way makes an additional stop at Irlam, adding to crowding. The recommended option must adequately address those issues. Simply adding additional stopping services would not provide enough capacity to match current demand, let alone the projected growth. The option should also include removing the stops at Irlam and some of the stops at Widnes and Birchwood made by the inter-regional trains.

It is vital that the revised timetable must remain attractive to as many existing passengers as possible, with the least possible disbenefit to those who are affected. For those reasons we agree that option 1.5, one additional four-car train in the high-peak train from Lime Street to Manchester Oxford Road (and return) with stops removed from the inter-regional services, is the best option. It would provide additional capacity for local passengers and also reduce crowding for longer distance passengers.

### 5.3 Option 1.6 high-peak Llandudno/Chester to Manchester Piccadilly

The comment that "Llandudno/Chester - Manchester Piccadilly high-peak hour services are expected to be over seated capacity from Warrington Bank Quay by 2024<sup>18</sup>" will surprise passengers on the route. Overcrowding on the route's trains is already a major issue for passengers. Removing the stops at Earlestown and Newton-le-Willows will provide some additional room, and when electrification brings four-car trains to the Liverpool - Manchester Chat Moss route, trains on that line should be able to provide adequate replacement capacity.

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<sup>18</sup> Op. cit. page 47.

However, as the Draft RUS notes, more capacity is needed for Warrington Bank Quay and stations beyond towards Chester and North Wales. The option recommends providing that capacity by operating four-car trains. We agree with the conclusion that the option should be recommended; however, we believe passengers will expect it to be implemented as soon as possible, not in more than four years' time.

#### **5.4 Option 1.7 Wigan Wallgate to Manchester Victoria**

The analysis of the demand on the route from Wigan through Atherton to Manchester shows that demand in the high-peak hour will exceed the total (seated and standing) capacity of the trains operated by over 300 passengers. It is, therefore, doubtful if operating two or three additional vehicles will be sufficient to have much real effect on the overcrowding that passengers on the route already experience. The electrification of other routes in the area offers the chance of a complete re-write of timetables, which opportunity should be used to make up the capacity shortfall. We agree with the recommendation to lengthen trains on the route, but, again, we have to point out that passengers will expect it to be done as soon as possible.

#### **5.5 Option 2.1 fourth platform at Manchester Airport**

The mix of services at Manchester Airport is complex and includes local suburban, inter-urban and inter-regional services. Although the passenger loads of many trains between Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Airport require only one unit, it is impractical to add/detach units at Piccadilly. The practice would increase platform occupancy and passengers would not tolerate the inconvenience of moving between units.

Growth on inter-urban and inter-regional services has been considerable and already many trains are at the maximum length that can be accommodated at many of the stations they serve. Continuing growth will have to be met by longer trains; electrification in Lancashire is likely to bring four-car Electric Multiple Units (EMUs), at times operated in pairs.

Passenger Focus is aware of the inter-relationships between this option and many others in the Draft RUS, particularly those directed at peak crowding in Manchester, capacity on trans-Pennine routes and strategic connectivity across the North. Manchester Airport is a terminus, which in itself reduces platform capacity. Construction of the western link would improve strategic connectivity, particularly by providing a direct link to Chester and North Wales, and Runcorn and Liverpool. Another major benefit would be to reduce the number of terminating trains, and thereby increase capacity at Manchester Airport station.

Without that link it is vital that the capacity provided by an additional platform is provided as soon as possible; it must be ready before the other recommended

options that depend on it can be introduced. It is essential that the capacity of the local network is increased to a structured strategy.

### **5.6 Option 3.1 Huddersfield to Leeds peak shuttle**

The growth in demand for train travel in the North of England has been exacerbated by the “one size fits all” approach to train services adopted in the decades of retrenchment. Even today, after ten or more years of considerable growth, many services still attempt to serve disparate markets: long-distance inter-regional, shorter-distance inter-urban and short-distance commuter. It is essential that, as far as possible, the different market segments are served by bespoke services. Therefore Passenger Focus is pleased that the Draft RUS recommends the option to operate additional peak shuttles between Huddersfield and Leeds.

### **5.7 Option 3.2 sixth Manchester to Leeds semi-fast service in the peaks**

We note the assessment that this option has significant and expensive infrastructure requirements, and that the additional capacity is required only between Huddersfield and Leeds.

### **5.8 Option 3.3 lengthen peak services to/from Manchester**

We note that the economic assessment has been limited to the peaks. Because the additional rolling stock will be available between peaks (obviously subject to the requirements of the maintenance and cleaning regimes) it is sensible to make best use of it. We suggest that an appraisal of the costs and benefits of running longer trains in the off-peak should be carried out. An all-day appraisal was carried out for option 4.1.

Adding a fourth car to three-car sets - it must be remembered that the current operator of the trans-Pennine franchise proposed lengthening the Class 185 units to four cars - is not an option that can be achieved in an affordable way. TransPennine Express already makes full use of the limited number of two-car Class 170 trains available to it; operating them as two-unit trains would be a means of providing four-car trains, but not enough additional trains are likely to become available.

We note that the assessment believes that phased implementation of the additional cars would match demand. Passengers will expect that the operator continues to monitor crowding on the route. Providing the additional rolling stock will probably prove to be the most difficult part of this option. How feasible will it be to provide small numbers of additional rolling stock over the CP5 and CP6 timescale?

### **5.9 Option 4.1 lengthen Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport services**

Passengers will be pleased that the option to provide an additional vehicle for two diagrams, to increase capacity on the route’s busiest trains has been recommended.

It should be implemented as soon as possible. However, we must repeat the question - how will the additional rolling stock be resourced?

### **5.10 Options 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 shuttles between Manchester and Sheffield, extend Hull to Sheffield service as Sheffield to Manchester shuttle**

Passengers who travel on the stopping service between Manchester and Sheffield will be disappointed that the previously announced plans for an hourly service have been cancelled. The additional capacity provided by four-car trains on East Midlands Trains services and some strengthening of TransPennine Express services is designed to cater for expected demand for inter-regional passengers, but provides nothing for passengers travelling intermediately. It must be remembered that long-distance trains in the peaks make additional stops at Dore and Chinley; although by doing so they provide an enhanced peak service, they do so at the cost of adding to the crowding experienced by long-distance passengers. As demand continues to grow adequate services and capacity for the discrete markets on the route should be developed.

It is vital that adequate diversionary capability is provided when the route is not available because of engineering work. An alternative route between Sheffield and Manchester, using a combination of lines, via Thornhill LNW Junction (near Mirfield) should be viable. Weekend demand is often suppressed by line closures and rail replacement bus services. Passengers expect to travel by rail all the way.

### **5.11 peak crowding Retford and Penistone lines, calls at Elsecar**

The current suppressed demand on the Penistone line, coupled with the numbers of houses recently built, or planned to be built, along the line, require adequate interventions. Passengers who are already standing will not be pleased to see that the RUS concludes that there will be sufficient capacity to 2024. Local opinion is that the mix of four-car trains on Sheffield to Leeds services, and two-car trains on the Penistone Line would be unsatisfactory. The fact that the tram-train project will not be trialled on the line appears to have left it somewhat in limbo. The RUS notes that “further work is required”. Passenger Focus agrees, and supports local stakeholders, who believe that four-car trains and the longer platforms they will require would match current passengers’ aspirations. Together with more frequent services they would further stimulate demand<sup>19</sup>.

The number of passengers at Elsecar in 2008/9 was 122,854<sup>20</sup>, an increase of 31.34% over the previous year. To allow the restoration of the Elsecar stop in Penistone line services, we support the recommendation to include journey time improvements on the Penistone line as part of the work to reduce journey times on the Sheffield to Leeds route. The review and optimisation of line speeds should be an

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<sup>19</sup> The Huddersfield-Penistone-Sheffield Rail Users’ Association comment on this in their response to the Draft RUS.

<sup>20</sup> Station usage 0809, ORR Excel file.

automatic and integrated function of track renewals on any route, and not treated as a separate and expensive 'enhancement' scheme.

We note that the passenger count information in the RUS shows that a two-car Class 142 will provide insufficient capacity on the current 8.27 Lincoln to Adwick train. We agree that further analysis of demand and capacity on the Retford line is required. It should be undertaken promptly, to enable the analysis to inform the development of the rolling stock strategy.

### **5.12 Freight capacity**

Passengers will not accept having the number of passenger trains reduced to accommodate the demands of freight operators; therefore Passenger Focus welcomes the additional capacity recommended by the Draft RUS to accommodate freight traffic. However, freight has grown at an average of less than half of one percent since 2002/3, whereas the Draft RUS forecasts 3% growth to 2030. Passenger Focus suggests that the validity of the forecast should be reviewed.

### **5.13 Peak capacity Aire Valley and Wakefield Westgate lines**

We note the comments in the Draft RUS regarding the estimated demand on the Ilkley and Skipton services by 2024 relative to the capacity proposed by the Yorkshire and the Humber RUS. The proposal that the Ilkley line is reviewed "in the next control period" i.e., not until 2014 or later is surprising. Given the difficulty in forecasting demand, and the fact that alternative rolling stock (the proposed six-car trains) is required by the current plans to meet demand, we suggest that the services should be reviewed regularly.

The situation is similar on the Skipton line, where the high-peak service and one shoulder-peak train are "assumed to be six-car EMU<sup>21</sup>". Passengers will not be pleased by the fact that by 2024, although there will be more passengers than seats, those standing will be doing so for less than 20 minutes. They do not stand in their motor car, why should they accept having to stand in a train?

Passenger Focus notes that the demand on the Harrogate to Leeds route is some 11% higher than on the Ilkley to Leeds route. That demand is met by running diesel rolling stock (4 x 20 metre vehicles) with less seating capacity than the electric trains used on the Ilkley route. Two shuttles from Horsforth are proposed for the morning high peak. Passenger Focus believes that the operation of those trains from Harrogate to cater for organic growth, and potential developments such as links with Leeds Bradford International Airport, should be considered.

On the Wakefield Westgate line seating capacity will be barely adequate in 2024, but that also relies on a number of assumed interventions being completed. Passengers will increasingly expect better travelling conditions, not the maintenance of present

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<sup>21</sup> Op. cit. page 75.

standards. Consequently Passenger Focus believes that capacity should be increased to match demand as closely as possible.

#### **5.14 Peak capacity at Leeds**

Despite the extensive works that have been carried out at Leeds station over the last decade growth in passenger numbers and train services is once more causing capacity issues. The Draft RUS lists the assumed formations of local services in the high-peak hour in 2024, and all are at least four cars. Longer trains, providing platform space is available, are the first option for increasing capacity.

Additional trains also, normally, require additional rolling stock, unless peak services can be 'flipped-back' to provide a second inbound journey; they also require track capacity. The infrastructure requirements listed in the Draft RUS can be provided in a staged way, which could help in terms of the value for money considerations which are to the fore now and for the foreseeable future. Ensuring the appropriate links between train and infrastructure capacity will be essential. Passengers will not be tolerant of any mismatch between demand and capacity if interventions have been identified and developed but not implemented.

We note that the appraisal concludes that the benefit cost ratio of the schemes to increase the capacity of peak services at Leeds is 2.5. It is clear that growth in passenger numbers is continuing; the schemes must be developed ready for implementation that is phased to match that passenger growth.

#### **5.15 Strategic connectivity across the North**

##### **Capacity**

Passenger growth estimates in the Northern Hub study show that if the northern Regional Economic Strategies and City Regions' Development Programmes are successfully implemented, then by 2029/30 journeys across all northern corridors would almost double from 105.30 million to 205.25 million. Key trans-Pennine corridors would see increases of up to 118%, incrementally over 5% per annum. This exceeds the aspiration in the 2007 White Paper 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' of 100% growth in passenger numbers to 2037.

Passenger Focus's research<sup>22</sup> shows that the ability to get a seat on the train is passengers' fourth highest priority for improvement. Sufficient capacity must be provided to keep pace with this growth and to address the possibility of overcrowding becoming a barrier to this growth. Train lengthening and additional services are cited throughout the study document; however without the support of a clear strategy of rolling stock provision.

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<sup>22</sup> Passengers' priorities for improvements in rail services, March 2010

## **Journey time improvements**

Passenger Focus supports work to reduce journey times along key corridors between principal cities. Again this is supported by our research on passengers' priorities. Complete recasting of regional timetables will be required and these should be robust in order to support passengers' second and third highest priorities of punctuality and train frequency.

## **Manchester City Centre**

The Northern Hub Study states that journeys from the Sheffield corridor to Manchester are quicker if routed to Manchester Piccadilly than to Victoria and concludes that: "Sheffield to Manchester and Manchester Airport journeys must be via Manchester Piccadilly."<sup>23</sup> However, the recommended option 2 supports routeing a pair of services running beyond Manchester via Victoria, which would seem contradictory to that conclusion and not supportive of passengers' priorities.

The comment that, by concentrating services to Manchester Airport on platforms 13-16 in the remodelled Piccadilly, this will "(make) the journey easier for passengers"<sup>24</sup> needs some qualification. These platforms are furthest from the station's main entrance, which will not appeal to those passengers with the burden of most luggage. If airport services are to be concentrated on those platforms a bespoke airport hub should be created, with its own entrance and road access.

Simplifying operations at Manchester Piccadilly and remodelling the station to allocate groups of services to specific platforms is a measure that would be welcomed by passengers looking for their service to depart from a regular and familiar location within the station.

Creation of two additional through platforms at Piccadilly will create additional capacity that we welcome. However, retaining the freight paths via this route will have an impact on the available capacity. Passengers will not accept having the number of passenger trains reduced to accommodate the demands of freight operators, especially at peak times.

If platforms were built at Salford Central on the Liverpool lines, the additional stops in services routed around Manchester City Centre would add to journey times and potentially work against speed increases being created. Capacity at Victoria is improved by through working, however the Study concedes that routeing services through Victoria (e.g. North trans-Pennine – Manchester Airport) uses capacity at Victoria, adds conflicts at a new junction east of Ordsall Lane and at Castlefield Junction and uses capacity on the Castlefield corridor, creating a trade-off with capacity at Piccadilly. This must be carefully balanced, as passengers will not accept measures which result in bottlenecks.

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<sup>23</sup> Northern Hub Study, 6.4.3, page 65

<sup>24</sup> Northern Hub Study, 5.11.9, page 54

## Radial routes

Works to increase service frequencies and re-route fast services to leave flexibility for more commuter services will be welcomed by passengers as ways of reducing waiting time and overcrowding, and increasing capacity. However, increases to longer distance services on the West Coast Main Line impact on track capacity available for commuter trains. Passengers on the Macclesfield line, where some local stations have seen passengers increase by more than 40%<sup>25</sup>, will be disappointed that there is no plan to improve their hourly service, especially if there are few additional trains increasing capacity at peak periods.

The comment that “as passenger numbers grow the business case for further incremental linespeed improvements will improve”<sup>26</sup> will be reassuring to passengers. However, it is important that growth is monitored and that provision keeps pace with demand to avoid increasing passenger dissatisfaction and the barriers associated with crowding.

Additional services and improved direct connections would be supported where this provides benefit to passengers and sufficient demand exists for reaching destinations such as employment or leisure opportunities. However, this would need to be balanced against the impact on line capacity and provision for growth for existing services.

Wider factors such as getting to stations, car parking and interchange with other services including other modes should also be recognised.

## Disruption during major works and future opportunities

The way that disruption is handled while construction is under way will be key to maintaining passenger satisfaction. Passengers will expect disruption to be kept to a minimum and will not expect any reduction of existing services during construction periods. Recent work<sup>27</sup> for Passenger Focus undertaken to assess passengers' needs during the Birmingham Gateway project to rebuild New Street station confirms this. The study found that the highest priority for passengers is the extent of disruption they will have to face during the work. Disruption includes not just changes to timetables and services, but also anything affecting journeys and using stations.

Consequently, future opportunities involving major construction, such as the potential Ardwick Eastern Flyover, must be planned to fully acknowledge passengers' dislike of disrupted journeys. If such a project followed remodelling work at Manchester Piccadilly passengers' tolerance would be sorely tested. Planning should take this into account and realise the human impact of disruption on passengers. For example,

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<sup>25</sup> Station usage 0809: ORR Excel file

<sup>26</sup> Northern Hub Study, 5.11.6, page 50

<sup>27</sup> Passenger Needs During Birmingham New Street Redevelopment: Passenger Focus December 2010.

the need to re-orient and re-familiarise themselves with the changes as work progresses - as well as the level of dissatisfaction this creates.

## 6. Summary table of Passenger Focus' responses to RUS options

Gap	Option	RUS conclusion	Passenger Focus opinion	
1	1.1 Chat Moss services	not recommended	agree	
	1.2	additional capacity on peak CLC services	agree	
	1.3		agree	
	1.4		agree	
	1.5		agree	
		1.6 high peak Llandudno/Chester to Manchester	implement in CP5	agree, but as soon as possible
		1.7 Wigan Wallgate to Manchester Victoria	implement	agree, but as soon as possible
2	2.1 fourth platform at Manchester Airport	recommended	agree	
3	3.1 Huddersfield to Leeds peak shuttle	recommended, implement in CP6	agree, but as soon as possible	
	3.2 6th. Manchester to Leeds semi-fast in peaks	not recommended	noted	
	3.3 lengthen peak services to/from Manchester	recommended, implement in CP5 & 6	agree, but monitor and implement as soon as required	
4	4.1 lengthen Cleethorpes to Manchester Airport services	recommended, implement in CP6	agree, but implement asap	
	4.2	shuttles Manchester to Sheffield, extend Hull to Sheffield service as Sheffield to Manchester shuttle	provide adequate capacity for the various markets	
	4.3			not recommended
	4.4			not recommended
5	Retford and Penistone lines	R: no option, monitor P: improve linespeeds		R: agree, must be done to inform rolling stock strategy P: agree; develop line's potential
6	Freight	Scunthorpe and Knottingley	agree	
7	Peak capacity Aire Valley and Wakefield Westgate lines	Review in CP5 (Ilkley); no options (Skipton and Wakefield);	disagree; keep under review.	
8	Peak capacity at Leeds	additional platforms	agree	
9	Strategic connectivity across the North	Option 2 of the Manchester Hub	adopt the improvements that best meet the needs of passengers in the North.	

## Appendix A: List of consultees

We arranged two sets of meetings with rail user groups (RUGs) one in December, 2009, the 9th. in Leeds and the 10th. in Manchester, and in 2010 at Leeds on 17th. November, and Manchester on 19th. November 2010. Network Rail attended the meetings to make presentations. The groups who attended are listed below.

### Railway and other user groups

Organisation
Aire Valley Rail Users' Group
Bradford Rail Users' Group
Campaign for Better Transport Lancashire
Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, Cumbria
Copeland Rail Users' Group
East Cheshire Lines Rail Users' Group
Friends of Carnforth Station
Friends of Eccles Station
Goyt Valley Rail Users' Association
Greater Manchester Transport Campaign
Halifax & District Rail Action Group
Harrogate Line Rail Users' Group
Hope Valley Rail Users' Group
Huddersfield Penistone Sheffield Rail Users' Association
Hull & East Riding Rail Users' Association
Lakes Line Rail Users' Group
Lancaster and Skipton Rail Users' Group
Mid Cheshire Rail Users' Association
North Cheshire Rail Users' Group
North Trafford Rail Group
North West Transport Activists' Roundtable
OPSTA - Ormskirk, Preston and Southport Travellers' Association
Pontefract District Rail Action Group
Rail Development Humber
Railfuture
Railfuture Lincolnshire
Railfuture North East
Railfuture Yorkshire
Ribble Valley Rail
Saltburn Line Users' Group
Selby & District Rail Users' Group
Settle – Carlisle Line
Sheffield Passengers' Association
SELRAP - Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership
Slaitwaite & Marsden Action on Rail Transport

STELLA - Support the East Lancashire Line Association
STORM - Support the Oldham, Rochdale & Manchester Rail Lines Group
Sustainable Transport Group
TravelWatch NorthWest
West Yorkshire Campaign for Better Transport
Wharfedale Rail Users' Group
Wirral Transport Users' Association

### Community Rail Partnerships

Organisation
Association of Community Rail Partnerships
Barton Cleethorpes Community Rail Partnership
Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership
Cumbria Community Rail Partnership
High Peak & Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership
Leeds – Morecambe Community Rail Partnership
Lincolnshire County Council Community Rail Partnership
Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership
Yorkshire Coast Rail Partnership

## Appendix B: Bibliography

- Passenger Focus's response to the East Coast Main Line RUS Draft for Consultation 2007
- Passenger Focus's response to the North Western RUS Draft for Consultation 2008
- Passenger Focus's response to the Lancashire and Cumbria RUS Draft for Consultation 2008
- Passenger Focus's response to the Yorkshire and Humber RUS Draft for Consultation 2008
- Passenger Focus's response to the Merseyside RUS Draft for Consultation 2009
- Passenger Focus's response to the East Midlands RUS Draft for Consultation 2009
- Getting to the train Passenger Focus February 2009
- Passengers' priorities for improvements in rail services; Passenger Focus, March 2010
- Passenger Needs During Birmingham New Street Redevelopment: for Network Rail and Passenger Focus; December 2010
- What do passengers want? Passenger Focus December 2010
- The Northern Hub studies Network Rail
- Wakefield Kirkgate Railway Station Conservation Management Plan Consultation Draft Purcell Miller Tritton LLP August 2010



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