



Passenger Focus' response to Network Rail's
Lancashire and Cumbria Route Utilisation Strategy
Draft for Consultation

July 2008

Passenger Focus is the independent national rail consumer watchdog. It is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Transport.

Our mission is to get the best deal for Britain's rail 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 rail passengers and we work with the rail industry, other passenger groups and Government to secure journey improvements.

Our vision is to ensure that the rail industry and Government are always

‘putting rail passengers first’

This will be achieved through our mission of

‘getting the best deal for passengers’

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1. Executive summary

The numbers of people travelling by rail are increasing. Performance on the railways is steadily improving and passenger satisfaction is rising. Passenger Focus expects the programme of Route Utilisation Strategies (RUSes) 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*¹.”

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 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 facilities for car parking, frequency of train services and connections with other train services have also been clear factors in overall satisfaction ratings. Passenger Focus expects RUSes to address the link between passenger satisfaction and the development of capacity.

Our submission is based on comprehensive research with 4,559² passengers, looking from the passenger viewpoint at the options proposed for inclusion in the final RUS, as well as generic issues regarding the passenger viewpoint on fares, satisfaction and wider rail issues.

Economic growth across parts of the RUS area is evident with new building developments, job creation and improved leisure and social opportunities. Blackburn’s “Masterplan” to renew the town centre and the work in other towns such as Whitehaven, with the “Hub” and marina, are typical. However, there are many towns and villages covered within the geographic scope of this RUS consultation that suffer from high levels of social and rural deprivation where easily accessible rail services or even meaningful information about rail services for many potential passengers is simply not available.

It is clear that the railways in Lancashire and Cumbria, operated by Northern Rail and First TransPennine Express, are performing with a considerable degree of success, with Northern achieving an overall satisfaction rating of 79% (of 1,041 passengers surveyed) and First TransPennine Express achieving an overall satisfaction rating of 84% (of 1,020 passengers surveyed)³. The steady growth in passenger numbers, the

¹ Extract from Office of Rail Regulation Guidelines on RUSes (June 2005)

² 899 on the Cumbrian Coast and 967 on the East Lancs. Lines, Sep. 2007; 1,041 on Northern, 1,020 on TransPennine Express for the Spring 2008 National Passenger Survey; 632 on Windermere branch, March 2008

³ National Passenger Survey, Passenger Focus, Spring 2008

good overall satisfaction ratings and improved performance demonstrate that the RUS should build on those solid foundations.

The RUS proposes many sensible options to make “*efficient use and development of the capacity available*” which we support. However, our new research demonstrates some options which Network Rail propose to be considered further as part of the final RUS are not supported by passengers, and alternatives should be considered, ensuring the passenger viewpoint is at the heart of the decision-making process.

This would ensure that train services meet passenger expectations, and avoids the scenario that the RUS provides an operational solution to improve capacity and performance that creates changes in service patterns that do not meet the needs of passengers.

Passengers will want to know what the RUS offers to those who use the railway – and who pay for it. Do the options provide benefits? Do they offer solutions to difficulties or shortcomings in the present service? Will they match passengers’ priorities and:

- increase frequencies?
- increase connectivity?
- increase reliability?
- improve punctuality?
- improve stations?

Passengers also 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 drive a real step-change in improved passenger services for Lancashire and Cumbria
- options that meet passengers’ aspirations and requirements
- options that are designed not only to serve new developments, but to be in place at the same time as those developments, not later, after travel patterns have been established
- options that are capable of integrating with other proposals for social and economic development in the region
- options to improve interchange at stations where proposed capacity improvements to the route will lead to an increase in passenger numbers

3. Introduction

Passenger Focus welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Lancashire and Cumbria RUS Draft for Consultation. Passenger Focus supports the broad objectives behind the RUS process and welcomes the consultative approach adopted by Network Rail.

Passenger Focus believes that the RUS is a vital component to inform the implementation of the North West Regional Planning Assessment (RPA), the Regional Economic Strategy, the Lancashire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011, the Cumbria Local Transport Plan 2006/07-2011/12 and the Cumbrian Destination Management Plan.

We understand there are practicalities around funding some of the proposed RUS options. However, we make no apologies for having an aspirational vision of the future of the rail network in Lancashire and Cumbria. The total number of passenger journeys on services in the 2005-06 financial year was 10.2 million. This is a 22% increase since 1998/1999. Demand forecasts indicate up to 2.8% growth in passenger demand per annum over the next ten years, a total of 40%. An aspirational approach is required to manage current and predicted demand in growth and to meet the stated transport objectives to promote economic growth, social inclusion, health and protection of our environment through a safe, integrated, effective and efficient transport system.

Our response to this consultation is informed by liaison with stakeholders and user groups, our postbag, existing research, and bespoke research commissioned by Passenger Focus. As an evidence-based organisation, the Passenger Focus response to the consultation incorporates research with 4,559⁴ passengers, including findings obtained from new and comprehensive passenger research conducted on rail services in Lancashire and Cumbria⁵.

The priority generic issues for passengers from our new research⁶ can be summarised as:

- **Punctuality and reliability of the train**
- **Provision of information about train times**
- **Being able to get a seat**
- **Frequency of the trains on the route**
- **Journey time**

Further passenger issues:

- **Personal security at stations**

⁴ ibid. footnote 2

⁵ Continental, for Passenger Focus, September, 2007.

⁶ ibid.

- **Ease of getting to/from station**
- **Ease of getting on/off train**
- **Not having to change trains**
- **Ticket buying facilities**

Other Issues

The following issues are considered in section five, page 9 below, "General comments".

1. Inter-regional Links

2. Stations and Interchange

3. Social Inclusion

4. Tourism

5. Growth

6. Rolling stock

7. Other funders

8. Synergy

9. Network capability and engineering access

4. Scope: Lancashire and Cumbria Geography

The West Coast Main Line passes through the RUS area; Carlisle, Oxenholme, Lancaster and Preston are the RUS interfaces with the WCML. We understand the reasons given for the RUS excluding the WCML. However, it is our view that a holistic approach is required when deciding future investment on the rail network, and we suggest that options that overlap the two RUS areas should be developed now in the Lancashire and Cumbria RUS and taken forward to the West Coast Main Line RUS.

Our response also provides comment on routes that will be covered in the Yorkshire and Humber RUS.

5. General comments

5.1 Inter-Regional Links

The RUS consultation document highlights the areas where rail links are weak or non-existent; for example, there is currently no direct link between Accrington and Manchester, Burnley and Manchester, or Preston and Southport. There are weak links between Barrow and Carlisle, Carlisle and the Leeds City Region and between Preston and Liverpool (Figure 3.9 page 36 of the RUS Draft for Consultation).

Many people from Lancashire and Cumbria access employment and educational opportunities outside the region. Of the total North West rail market, more than a quarter of trips, 17.4 million annually, are to/from destinations outside the region. Of these trips, London (4.9 million) is the most popular destination, followed by Yorkshire and Humber (3.9 million trips). Other key destinations outside the region include the West Midlands (2.1 million trips), the East Midlands (1.5 million trips) and Wales (1.1 million trips). Of the 1.1 million trips generated to/from Scotland, one in three (364,000) are from/to Cumbria. Rail services tend to be used primarily for longer journeys, with around 85% of rail trips being over five miles in length (compared to 35% for all modes)⁷.

Passengers have an opportunity to work during their travel time on longer train journeys, and improved technology has made it easier for laptops and mobile phones to be used on the train keeping passengers in touch and in easy contact whilst they are on the move. It is much more common now for people to travel longer distances to work by train. Passenger Focus believes it essential that inter-regional rail links are strengthened where they are deemed to be poor and established where they are currently missing to enable people to travel more easily between areas.

5.2 Stations and Interchange

The facilities and standards at stations are very important to passengers. Network Rail has developed its National Stations Improvement Programme as a means to improve the standard of stations. Stations in the RUS area range from barely improved wayside platforms such as Roose to largely rebuilt stations such as Blackburn.

The RUS consultation document (3.3.5 page 32) highlights the most and least used stations in the region, with 70 stations in Lancashire and Cumbria catering for fewer than 100 passengers a day of which Netherton, Burnley Barracks and Braystones each serve fewer than 10 passengers a day. A balanced approach is required when trying to understand the reasons for stations having a low footfall. On the one hand the rail industry notes that demand for services at some stations is low, whilst on the

⁷ North West Regional Planning Assessment for the Railway, October 2006

other passengers note that the service provision is low thereby reducing demand. For example if you live in Braystones and want to travel to Whitehaven on weekdays, only four trains a day stop there, with no train between 08:00 and 15:45. The last train back from Whitehaven to Braystones is at 17:41, making it impossible for people to access evening classes or many jobs in the service industry.

The Furness Line Action Group (FLAG) states that:

“usage of Braystones ranks number 2386 out of 2501 stations across the country in terms of usage. The apparent fact that only 1600-1700 people get on or off there each year is both a symptom of the size of the local population and the fact that the service is currently inadequate.”⁸

The Copeland Rail Users Group has also conducted research⁹ into the problems at stations such as Seascale and has evidence of the amount of patronage lost by low platform heights.

The footfall figures released by the Office of Rail Regulation¹⁰ give an indication of patronage at stations – with some well-known caveats¹¹ - and there is obviously a clear correlation between size of local population and footfall at the local station. However that link is not the only one, as is shown by the difference between Kendal, population 27,521,¹² 2006/7 footfall 156,198, and Oxenholme, population 1,954,¹³ and footfall 309,969. Demand is also linked to service provision and reasons/need for travel. It is noteworthy that patronage at Askam, a station well-sited in the village it serves, has increased 14.3% in the two years 2004/5 to 2006/7.

45% of the 899 passengers questioned on the Cumbrian Coast route want trains to run later. 34% say that the use of the line is limited because of the infrequent train services. Of the 967 passengers surveyed on the East Lancashire route, 23% said the frequency of train services is limiting their use.¹⁴

In August 2007 Lancashire County Council commissioned a Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Study which was undertaken by the Transport Consultancy TAS, whose research mirrored that of Passenger Focus. The findings of a passenger survey commissioned by TAS highlight the constraints of the timetable, which are reflected by the fact that only 14% of passengers use the line more than once per week and only 21% of journeys were for work purposes. The survey also showed that 60% of people would like a more regular pattern of train departures and that 33% would like services to/from Leeds and Lancaster to run in the later evening.

⁸ FLAG newsletter 69, December 2007

⁹ Correspondence dated 4 July 2007

¹⁰ Office of Rail Regulation file “station-usage-2006-07”

¹¹ Journeys using PTE and other “intermodal” tickets are hard to capture; not a problem at the stations listed here

¹² 2001 census

¹³ Natland CP; 2001 census

¹⁴ *ibid.* footnote 5

Passenger Focus would urge Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies to do their utmost to increase service frequency, to operate trains in the later evening and to develop lightly used stations, TAS also identified that:

“It is important to involve the local community in the railway, as in our experience this will help to raise the profile of the line in the area it serves.”¹⁵

Passenger Focus supports TAS’s findings especially the development of Community Rail Partnerships as a way of supporting and developing low footfall stations. We applaud Northern Rail for their support of Community Rail Partnerships.¹⁶ These are the existing partnerships:

Settle – Carlisle Railway Development Company
Leeds – Morecambe
Cumbrian Coast
Lakes Line (Windermere)
South Fylde Line (Blackpool South – Kirkham)
West of Lancashire (Preston – Ormskirk)
East Lancashire (Preston – Colne)
Clitheroe Line

This extensive coverage of the lines in the RUS, coupled with station partnerships, is useful to the process of developing the stations on those lines.

Northern, in their response¹⁷ to the Office of Rail Regulation regarding Network Rail’s Strategic Business Plan, state (para 7.16):

“In terms of leverage of third party investment for station improvements, this should be considered an essential source of funding given the size, age and condition of the station portfolio. More should be done to encourage Councils and other local organisations to perceive the station as gateway to their communities and acknowledge the importance of rail to their connectivity and therefore economic well being. Third party funding for stations should not be seen as a “nice to have” but as a legitimate area of spend for local public and private organisations.”

Northern’s comments in their response to Network Rail show that they are aware of the benefits that an inclusive approach would bring to the issue. The RUS should begin the essential process of creating a strategy for improving stations and making the best use of them – both by and for the communities they serve.

¹⁵ Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Study for Lancashire County Council August 2007 TAS Consultancy

¹⁶ “Community Strategy 2007” Northern Rail Limited

¹⁷ Letter dated 8 January 2008, from the ORR web site

5.3 Social Inclusion

Picture postcard images of the Lake District and Lancashire mask hidden pockets of deprivation. This disparity between image and reality creates problems for those living in some rural areas which are deprived of public services. The North West Regional Assembly recognises the role of housing in supporting local economic development aspirations in some areas in the region which are a greater distance from major employment centres.

These areas face challenges in attracting new residents and creating new employment. Part of the policy approach in some of these areas appears to lie in providing housing for people who it is accepted are likely to commute out of the area, but who will over the long term help to make these locations more attractive to inward investors and thus encourage job creation in the locality. Relationships between the economy, labour markets and housing in the Lancashire sub region reflect the complex web of travel to work linkages, the presence of multiple centres of employment and the considerable variation between the past and current industrial structures of different parts of the sub-region.

Many people living in rural Cumbria and Lancashire find it difficult to access employment, education, training and health services. They live on low incomes and many do not have access to a car, relying instead on public transport. In the area served by Allerdale Borough Council, in the north of the area covered by the RUS, the 2001 national census recorded that 24% of households have no access to private transport.

For example many people without private transport cannot access further education or jobs within service industries when both are centred in towns where public transport services do not operate in the evening (for example, there is no train from Carlisle to stations to Settle, etc., after 17.55); or at weekends when there are no trains running on Sundays (much of the Cumbrian Coast Route). Many local bus services linking rural villages are infrequent and travel slowly on minor rural roads making journeys long and unattractive. Developing more accessible rail travel would open up opportunities to socially disadvantaged people for travel to work and educational settings. In September 2007 the Furness Line Action Group (FLAG) questioned¹⁸ people living in Dalton about their station usage. They had noted that although Dalton has twice¹⁹ the population of Grange-over-Sands it only has a fifth of the number of passengers. 317 people responded to the survey, and the biggest reason for low usage - cited by 84% of respondents - is the frequency of trains on the route. One person cited in the FLAG report states:

“according to Rail enquiries, Dalton does not exist!”

¹⁸ FLAG survey of the usage of Dalton Station September 2007

¹⁹ Ward population figures show for Grange: 4,098 people, for Dalton South alone: 6,152 people. Source: Cumbria population ONS 2005 in Cumbria CC's "Building Pride in Cumbria".

Another comment highlighted the problem with lack of connectivity between modes of transport:

“living in Stainton, Dalton is my nearest station. Unfortunately no buses run that way”

The RUS Consultation document identifies areas where train services are infrequent and often slow, and connectivity is poor. For example train journeys between Barrow and Carlisle typically take nearly two and a half hours to cover around 88 miles making them unattractive to passengers, whilst train journeys between Carlisle and Preston are the same distance and take around one hour and ten minutes.

On 6th February 2007, fifteen Rail Users Groups (RUGs) and Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) in Lancashire and Cumbria were represented at a meeting held at Carnforth Station organised and facilitated by Passenger Focus. The meeting focussed on identifying current issues and exploring potential solutions and opportunities for improvements to train services in Lancashire and Cumbria. At the meeting the Lakes Line RUG, Furness Line Action Group, Copeland Rail User Group and TravelWatch NorthWest all identified irregular services, especially north of Barrow, and no Sunday service between Barrow and Whitehaven, to be major issues for passengers.²⁰

The Consultation document recognises the importance of strong regional and inter-regional transport links as a means of accessing employment and educational opportunities. The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Assessment highlight the importance of linking the RUS area to key urban centres to contribute to the regeneration of socially deprived areas by providing greater employment, education and leisure opportunities. Improved connectivity is also recognised in the RUS (page 37) as important for attracting inward investment and facilitating the deployment of strategic employment sites. Passenger Focus wholeheartedly supports these comments.

Development agencies and local authorities have to balance putting money into areas of significant deprivation in urban areas – which are fairly easy to identify given the high population density – with spreading it thinly to address small pockets of deprivation in the rural parts. These are often harder to find because of the smaller numbers involved. The North West Regional Planning Assessment states that:

“The counties of Cumbria and Lancashire account for fewer than 1% of North West rail trips, reflecting differences in station location and concentrations of employment, retail and service sector activity. Whilst these counties may have a lower mode share for rail than the metropolitan areas, these rail routes provide specific travel functions which are important to the local community”²¹

²⁰ Passenger Focus Rail User Group and Community Rail Partnership event held on 6th. February 2007.

²¹ North West Regional Planning Assessment for the Railway DfT, October 2006

Passenger Focus believes it is essential that improving social inclusion is seen as one of the main drivers of this RUS.

5.4 Tourism

Within Cumbria, tourism is one of the mainstays of the economy and is a major source of employment and revenue. The total number of jobs supported by tourism is estimated to be almost 25% of all employment in Cumbria. In 2005 15.5 million tourist trips were made to Cumbria and of these only around 5% were made by train with only 2% of visitors using train services to travel within Cumbria.²² Local visitor surveys bear this out, for example in 2005 the Cumbrian Tourist Board interviewed 442 visitors to Ulverston. Only 4% of people had travelled there by train.²³

Lancashire attracts around 50 million visitors per year, but the rail share of travel accounts for very few visitors, for example 3% in Morecambe. However the share rises to 13% in Lancaster,²⁴ due to the proximity of the station to the city centre and train service provision. Such results suggest that there is potential for increasing the number of tourists who travel by rail.

Recognising that potential, and the importance of Tourism within this RUS area, the RUS Stakeholder Management Group established a tourism sub-group chaired by Passenger Focus. The group met on several occasions and agreed that while visitor numbers were a good starting point for driving improvements, it was important to take into account the destinations which are currently being developed and areas where regeneration was being progressed. Moreover, current tourist activity shows that the key to the success of any rail improvements would depend on the marketing and promotion of the changes to visitors and local tourists.

The group also highlighted the importance of better intermodal links between national and local rail and between rail and other forms of transport (bus, taxi, cycle, etc.) to enable visitors to move easily between the railway station and tourist attractions; for example Windermere, one of the key tourist attractions in Cumbria. Passenger Focus questioned 632 passengers on the Windermere Line in March 2008. The majority (72%) were using the line for leisure purposes and 77% wanted to see better connections with main line services.²⁵

There was strong support for an ongoing partnership between the industry (particularly the TOCs), tourism boards and the North West Development Agency in order to achieve the successful development of any improvements. The group agreed that they were keen to work together to promote tourism and travel information.

²² Cumbria Tourism Destination Management Plan 2007-08 and Cumbria Tourism's Vision for Cumbria 1998-2008.

²³ Ulverston Visitor Survey 2005 Cumbria Tourist Board

²⁴ Lancashire Tourism quote from Tourism sub group meeting of 03/09/07

²⁵ Continental, for Passenger Focus, March 2008

Passenger Focus believes it is essential that the final RUS considers tourism as a relevant factor in planning the area's train services.

5.5 Growth

The Lancashire and Cumbria RUS Draft for Consultation (page 65) suggests that passenger demand is expected to grow by 40% up to 2018. The following table shows stations where footfalls already show large increases.

Table 5.1

| Station | Footfall | | | change 05-06 | change 06-07 | change 05-07 |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 2004/5 | 2005/6 | 2006/7 | | | |
| Carlisle | 1,169,761 | 1,296,587 | 1,365,675 | 10.84% | 5.33% | 16.75% |
| Dalston | 17,101 | 18,278 | 21,486 | 6.88% | 17.55% | 25.64% |
| Harrington | 10,679 | 12,670 | 12,901 | 18.64% | 1.82% | 20.81% |
| Parton | 3,910 | 5,094 | 4,536 | 30.28% | -10.95% | 16.01% |
| Corkickle | 7,130 | 17,707 | 17,658 | 148.35% | -0.28% | 147.66% |
| St Bees | 27,646 | 31,222 | 33,578 | 12.93% | 7.55% | 21.46% |
| Sellafield | 208,197 | 232,449 | 258,777 | 11.65% | 11.33% | 24.29% |
| Drigg | 7,108 | 11,013 | 11,724 | 54.94% | 6.46% | 64.94% |
| Silecroft | 5,881 | 8,669 | 7,580 | 47.41% | -12.56% | 28.89% |

Cumbria County Council predicts large increases in population of around 17.9% in Eden and 15.3% in South Lakeland within the next 20 years.²⁶ East Lancashire has seen a year on year population rise from 511,000 in 1991 to 526,000 in 2006. This trend is also expected to continue.²⁷

The recent TAS study²⁸ of the Morecambe, Lancaster, and Leeds line identifies that the line has an extensive catchment area, with approximately 151,000 people residing within five kilometres of a station between Skipton and Morecambe.

The local population has grown significantly in recent years and TAS forecasts, which are based on the TEMPRO model used by the Department for Transport (DfT), suggest that this will continue. Overall, the population of the districts served by the line is forecast to increase by around 10% by 2021, with the most significant growth (up to 18%) expected to take place around Settle and to the north and east of Lancaster.²⁹

It is essential that the rail industry and Government plan effectively for this expected population growth. Service improvements should be in place *before* new houses or

²⁶ <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/elibrary/Content/Internet/536/673/1756/39359155329.ppt>

²⁷ Office of National Statistics online <http://www.ons.gov.uk/>

²⁸ Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Study Final Proposals, TAS for Lancashire CC, August 2007

²⁹ *ibid.*

employment sites are developed. If improvements to services are only available afterwards potential passengers will have already decided on their travel plans and fewer will choose rail.

With an increase in population there is the likelihood for the potential increase in the number of cars and lorries on our roads. Improvements to public transport can have positive impacts on local air quality and climate change, through modal shift from private car to train travel and corresponding reduction in pollutants such as CO₂ and particulates. Passenger Focus is supportive of encouraging more people to travel by train, the most environmentally friendly form of public transport.

The environmental benefits to be gained from modal shift are shown by this, from the TAS report:

“If one million company car drivers used the train for 50% of their business mileage instead of a single occupancy car then CO₂ comparable to half the annual total from a power station would be saved”.

Train services need to be attractive enough to encourage modal shift. That means having sufficient trains, with enough seating, and which are punctual and offer good value for money.³⁰

Passenger Focus believes it is essential that population growth, as well as new housing and business developments, should be a major consideration in timetable and franchise planning. It is a fundamental requirement that good rail links are in place **before** new housing and employment sites are developed. This RUS needs to formally recognise that.

5.6 Rolling stock

Passengers and stakeholders have told us that the trains used by Northern in the RUS area are unsuitable for many of the services. Long journeys in class 142 “Pacers” are more to be endured than enjoyed because of the all too frequently uncomfortable ride. Their seating capacity is limited (c. 120) and access is hampered by the steps inside their doorways. Class 150 trains also offer basic accommodation, far from the average family motor car’s. Class 156 trains and class 158 trains are now showing their age – although the youngest of Northern’s fleet of diesels, most are now nearly 20 years old – and offer some seats with very limited leg-room. The 158s are the only diesel trains that offer air-conditioning, albeit of a somewhat unreliable nature.

Although thorough refurbishment can offer a really noticeable step-change in the on-board environment for passengers, all Northern’s fleet of diesel trains is nearly due for replacement. However, the only sign of planning for that is the recent

³⁰ Passenger Focus Research into Rail Passengers’ Priorities for Improvements, July 2007

announcement that a trial of “tram-trains” will take place on Northern’s route between Huddersfield and Sheffield. Details of what is planned are sketchy; there are no firm dates, and there appears to be the unnecessary additional expense of having to lower platform heights. Other unanswered questions are general inter-operability at stations – high platform, low access tram-train/low platform, normal access train – will be unwanted problems, and the cost of making alterations. In short, they appear to be far further in the future than a simple replacement of existing trains.

The time has arrived to design, for routes such as those in the RUS area, a new train capable of improving passengers’ travelling environment, with increased reliability and performance, and, possibly, offering different interior arrangements of seating and cycle spaces to match markets. The increase in passenger satisfaction and numbers driven by TransPennine Express’s class 185 trains shows the benefits new trains generate. Research in 2007³¹ found that 92% of passengers were satisfied with the ease of getting on and off the class 185 trains, but Northern’s rating for the same factor was only 75%.³² Overall the impact of new trains can be seen by comparing the scores for the “upkeep and repair of the train” – Northern scores 55%, TransPennine Express scores 91%.

However, the very success of the class 185 has added to growth in passenger numbers, and TransPennine Express routes in the RUS area are now subject to overcrowding. Efforts to add a fourth car to a majority of its class 185 fleet have been protracted, with no firm plans to date.

Passenger Focus urges Network Rail and Northern to consider fully in the RUS the impact that the benefits of new trains would provide; not just a growth in passenger numbers, but also in terms of increased productivity through faster journey times (subject to infrastructure, which, of course is one aim of this RUS) and reduced maintenance costs. The RUS should also consider the implications of longer class 185 trains, and incorporate any necessary plans.

5.7 Other funders

Although the rail industry business case criteria are not aligned to tackling social deprivation, Passenger Focus urges other funding bodies such as Central Government, North West Development Agency, Local Authorities and the business sector to work together with Network Rail and the Train Operators to identify and secure other sources of funding to develop new services or extend existing services. Section 3.9.3 (page 55) of the Consultation document highlights the key areas of social deprivation in Lancashire and Cumbria and recognises that rail could play an important role through improving access to education, employment, amenities and services to support and sustain economic growth and regeneration.

³¹ Published in *The Pennine Class 185 experience What do passengers think?* Passenger Focus, May 2007.

³² National Passenger Survey, Spring, 2008

A prime example of a gap requiring alternative funding is the lack of a regular Sunday service on the Cumbrian Coastal which could encourage more tourists to experience the beauty of the area. Expansion of the tourist market would be a catalyst for job creation. Of the 899 passengers questioned on the Passenger Focus Cumbrian Coastal Route survey 2008, 51% said they would use a Sunday service and a further 18% said they may use such a service.

Indeed a strong case for potential alternative funding was put forward in May 2007 by the consultancy JMP who were funded by the NWDA to research the feasibility of reopening the Keswick to Penrith rail link. The social, economic, environmental and health benefits fully justify the reinstatement of this service as a way of increasing the number of visitors and visitor spend.

Analysis from the study shows that the economic benefits of the project would exceed the costs of construction and operation, with a total Net Present Value of between £8 million and £17 million over a period of 60 years.

Forecasts indicate that the service would attract additional passenger numbers of between 240,000 to 320,000 per year in 2016 - broadly equivalent to current usage of Windermere station - generating visitor spend of over £1 million each year. In addition, almost 200 full-time jobs would be created by the construction and operation of the railway, worth £127 million over the next 60 years.³³

Local schemes such as raising platform heights could be addressed by joint funding from local funding agencies. (See also above, section 5.2 "Stations and interchange".)

Passenger Focus urges the North West Development Agency, Regional Assembly and regional councils and agencies to work with Network Rail, train operators and passenger representatives to identify and secure funding to improve stations and to develop rail services so they address the needs of social inclusion and tourism.

5.8 Synergy

The RUS covers the period to 2019. Enhancements to railway infrastructure are often expensive and also disruptive of the timetable. It is therefore sensible and better value for money to combine them with renewals in the same area. The RUS acknowledges that; for example the work required on the Cumbrian Coast, listed in table 6.3 on pages 76 and 77 of the RUS. Northern's franchise has an ultimate end date in 2013 and the West Coast and TransPennine franchises end in 2012. It is in the interest of passengers and stakeholders, especially those stakeholders who might be able to finance service enhancements, that Network Rail works to synchronise schemes to enhance the capability and capacity of the network in the RUS area with additional funding that might be available to increase train services.

³³ Keswick to Penrith Railway Stage 2 Report Business Case 23/05/07, JMP Consulting

New infrastructure must be ready on time for use by new trains; likewise new trains or enhanced services must be ready to use new infrastructure as soon as it is available.

Throughout our response we note many opportunities for agencies to work together to create the best options for passengers and stakeholders. Passenger Focus believes that joint working to improve the railway in Lancashire and Cumbria should be *the* guiding principle of this RUS.

5.9 Network capability and engineering access

The draft for consultation lists in section 3.5 *Infrastructure capacity and capability* gaps in the Lancashire and Cumbria network that hinder or prevent the railway operating services efficiently or to the extent required, either now or in the future. Headways between trains, especially on the Settle and Carlisle line, and line speeds on many routes are particular problems that reduce the network's effectiveness. The line speed between Blackburn to Clitheroe is only 45 mph, and the Barrow to Carnforth line is mostly limited to 60 mph with numerous lower limits. The effect is to greatly reduce the railway's advantage of a more direct route. Wherever and whenever, (see 5.8 above) infrastructure improvements should be made to allow the railway to meet passengers' and stakeholders' requirements and aspirations.

Level crossings are one reason for speed restrictions; public and accommodation crossings are numerous on lines in the RUS area. There are twenty "user worked" crossings on just one line, that between Preston and Ormskirk. Each one is a potential source of risk to passengers' and train crews' safety. Burnside Lower Level Crossing is a particularly "good" example of a crossing that hinders railway operations. Its five miles per hour speed limit obviously adds to journey time, but also causes energy to be wasted by requiring trains to slow and then accelerate.

Passenger Focus notes Network Rail's programme to close such crossings, but suggests that the RUS should include a commitment to expedite the programme of closures. Reducing the number of crossings would reduce operating costs, improve the operation of the railway and reduce risk.

In the light of current developments in the energy markets this RUS should begin the process of evaluating the case for electrification of lines in its area. The Oxenholme to Windermere line is one candidate, but like many RUS options, is dependent on schemes in other RUS areas also being considered before its business case can be made. Nevertheless, given the lead-time for railway projects, work should be included in this RUS.

Passengers show their opinion of the disruption caused by engineering work by voting with their feet. The Settle and Carlisle line has been closed on many occasions over recent years for engineering work, and the Cumbrian Coast route

was closed for 16 weeks in 2006 for work on the Leven Viaduct. The effects on rail patronage are shown in the two tables below.

Table 5.2 Settle and Carlisle line

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| Year | 2006 | 2007 | 2007 | 2007 | 2008 |
| Railway year | 2006/7 | | 2007/8 | | |
| engineering ³⁴ work | July | 11 weekends Jan. – Mar. | 7 – 22 Jul. | weekends Sep. – Dec. | 6 – 20 Jul. |

Patronage³⁵ at the line's stations – Armathwaite to Settle – totalled 291,798 for 2005/6, but declined to 284,241 in 2006/7, a reduction of 2.6%.

Table 5.3 Cumbrian Coast route

| Station | Footfall | | | change 05-06 | change 06-07 | change 05-07 |
|-------------|----------|---------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | 2004/5 | 2005/6 | 2006/7 | | | |
| Roose | 15,805 | 17,811 | 14,407 | 12.69% | -19.11% | -8.85% |
| Dalton | 27,042 | 27,570 | 20,314 | 1.95% | -26.32% | -24.88% |
| Ulverston | 164,292 | 168,421 | 147,444 | 2.51% | -12.46% | -10.25% |
| Cark | 46,598 | 43,986 | 36,993 | -5.61% | -15.90% | -20.61% |
| Kent's Bank | 18,701 | 19,678 | 15,560 | 5.22% | -20.93% | -16.80% |

This line closure meant that trains did not run between Grange-over-Sands and Barrow for 16 weeks between March and July, 2006. Buses ran over that section of line; passengers have a poor opinion of rail replacement bus services. 48% rated the use of replacement buses as “extremely or very inconvenient”.³⁶

The footfall figures above show the effects of extended engineering work on patronage, and are a clear sign that railway routes should not be closed for any but limited periods. Colin Foxall, the chairman of Passenger Focus has written³⁷ to the Secretary of State for Transport outlining proposals to reduce the impact of engineering work on passengers.

The final RUS should select options that increase the capability and capacity of the railway network in Lancashire and Cumbria to ensure that it meets the seven generic gaps identified.

³⁴ source: www.settle-carlisle.co.uk/news

³⁵ ibid footnote 10

³⁶ *Passengers' Attitudes Towards Engineering Works* RPC August 2003.

³⁷ Letter dated 16th June 2008

6. Analysis of Options

6.1 Cumbrian Coast Route

Gaps – Commuter Demand, Regional Links, Tourism, Social Deprivation, Inadequate Infrastructure and Train Performance.

6.1.1 Options C1 – C5b

Some stations on the Cumbrian Coast route have experienced above-average growth in recent years. Sellafield shows a growth of over 24% and Askam of over 14% in the two years 2004/5 to 2006/7. A number of the smaller stations have recorded very high growth – Drigg's patronage grew by nearly 65% between the same two years. Although in actual numbers that equates to a rough average of 15 additional passengers per day, the cumulative effect – especially considering that more of those additional passengers will be travelling at peak times on already busy trains – is one of pressure on the capacity of peak services.

It is essential that adequate capacity is provided for the Sellafield flows and that trains are operated at times suitable for passengers from stations north of Sellafield to get there, and back, at peak times. Using those additional trains to increase the service during the rest of the day would be the best option (C3a). A standard pattern timetable, and operating later in the day, would also address the gaps of tourism and social deprivation. Selling rail as a means of accessing tourist attractions would be much easier with a regular service, which, together with later trains, would permit better accessibility to a whole range of work, education and leisure options for people along the route. It should be noted that 34% of passengers interviewed³⁸ told us that their use of the line was reduced because of the infrequent timetable.

The timetable proposed by Northern³⁹ for December 2008, if implemented, does begin the task of bringing the timetable of the route between Barrow and Whitehaven into a standard pattern, whilst at the same time maintaining the existing trains for the peak flows to and from Sellafield. Two thirds of the passengers interviewed for our research opted for an hourly frequency, 58% required trains at a fixed time past each hour and 45% required trains to run in the later evening.

The timetable of the section of this route between Barrow and Lancaster also requires attention. It is clear from our research with passengers on the route that the irregular timetable is reducing rail's attractiveness and suppressing demand. An average of 68% of passengers from stations between Barrow and Carnforth stated a preference for an hourly train service, with 63% preferring a standard pattern timetable.

³⁸ *ibid.* footnote 5

³⁹ Draft December 2008 Timetables as at 21/4/08

6.1.2 Options C5c, d, C8, C9

Improving the capability of the Cumbrian Coast route would result in better services for passengers, by reducing journey times, thereby possibly permitting more services to be run with existing resources, or improving reliability. Reducing the costs of operating the line between Barrow and Carlisle would improve the economics of operating a full Sunday service on that section. Passenger Focus believes that these options should be developed for implementation of the necessary works at the earliest opportunity.

6.1.3 Options C6, C7a, C7b, C7c

Although Passenger Focus welcomes any improvement to Sunday services on the Cumbrian Coast Route, we believe that options C6, C7a and C7b do not go far enough in addressing the needs of passengers who wish to travel to and from tourist attractions on the Cumbrian Coast. We believe that option C7c should be included in the final RUS. Of the 899 passengers questioned in a recent survey on the Coastal Route, 51% said they would use a Sunday service between Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle, a further 18% were not sure. When asked how frequent the trains should be on this route on Sundays, 36% wanted them at least every 2 hours, but 61% wanted them to run more frequently.⁴⁰ Tourism agencies and Rail User Groups have identified that the lack of Sunday services is a barrier to the growth of tourism. It also has an impact on socially deprived areas where local people cannot access employment on Sundays by train. Since the majority of employment in Cumbria services the tourism industry, the lack of a Sunday service could be a barrier to many people accessing employment (see sections 5.5 and 5.6).

Although the rail industry business case criteria are not aligned to enhancing tourism or tackling social deprivation, Passenger Focus urges other potential funders such as the North West Development Agency, the Business Sector and Local Authorities to work together to identify and secure funding for enhanced Sunday services along the whole route between Barrow-in-Furness and Carlisle.

⁴⁰ Ibid footnote 5

6.2 Settle and Carlisle

Gaps – Regional Links, Commuter Demand, Tourism, Inadequate Infrastructure

6.2.1 Options S1, S2, S3

Passenger Focus disagrees that option S1 should not be included in the final RUS. An additional later evening train would be welcomed by passengers travelling between Carlisle and Kirby Stephen. We also strongly support option S2 being included in the Final RUS, with further development of option S3 being undertaken in consultation with other agencies including freight operators and user groups as a long term development. The benefit cost ratios of 1.5 for each option would suggest that both of these options would be worthy of more consideration.

In relation to later trains, Passenger Focus carried out research in Cumbria last year and of 1,531 passengers surveyed, 64% wanted to see trains running in the later evening. In relation to a two hourly Carlisle to Leeds service, at a Passenger Focus event held in February 2007, representatives from Leeds-Morecambe CRP, Settle and Carlisle Railway Development Company, Lancaster and Skipton Rail User group and Friends of Settle to Carlisle Line all identified that there were timetable gaps with infrequency of passenger trains being an issue.

Good connections at Carlisle between trains on the route to Leeds and trains on the West Coast Main Line are very important. Passenger Focus undertook passenger research in July 2007 to identify passenger priorities. 3,965 passengers were questioned and whilst nationally good connectivity was ranked 15 out of 30 attributes, in the North West this issue was more important and ranked fifth.⁴¹

6.2.2 Options S4, S5, S6

The increasing use of the Settle and Carlisle line for heavy freight trains reduces its capacity for passenger trains, particularly for semi-fast services such as the 15.03 from Carlisle. Although the freight companies could increase the speed of their trains by providing them with more horsepower to climb the long gradients, their increased costs would be uneconomic.

Meeting the expectations of both freight and passenger operators requires work to increase the route's capacity and capability. Passengers and stakeholders will expect improved journey times and frequencies in the lifetime of the RUS. If studies show that an hourly service is justified the means to operate it must be provided.

⁴¹ Passenger Focus *Rail Passengers Priorities for Improvements* Research Summary, July 2007

We therefore support the option to redouble the track in Carlisle, and suggest that studies to determine the works needed for additional speeds and capacity on the route are completed as soon as possible.

Passengers (and freight operators) do not like access to the network denied by engineering work. The development of less restrictive engineering regimes should also be completed in the near future.

6.3 Roses

Gaps - Regional Links, Commuter Demand, Social Deprivation and Interchange

The Roses Line includes three separate but inter-linked services: Blackpool South to Colne, Manchester to Clitheroe and Blackpool North to York via Halifax.

Blackpool South to Colne: an hourly service of all-stations trains through three disparate areas; the Fylde Coast conurbation from Blackpool to Lytham, the Preston conurbation and the East Lancashire conurbation from Blackburn to Colne.

Manchester to Clitheroe: an hourly service, generally all-stations between Bolton and Clitheroe, with additional services at peaks, some of which terminate at Blackburn.

Blackpool North to York via Halifax: an hourly service, providing a semi-fast service for passengers between Preston, Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley.

The common point for all three services is Blackburn. All three services suffer from slow journeys, partly because of the number of stops, but also because of the nature of the infrastructure over which they run. The Colne and Clitheroe services suffer from their hourly frequency, particularly the former, as an hourly frequency in a conurbation greatly reduces the service's attractiveness to passengers. Despite that, stations along the Colne route are showing encouraging growth,⁴² with Nelson, Church & Oswaldtwistle and Rishton all having 19% more passengers in 2006/7 than in 2004/5. Growth at stations on the Clitheroe line is also strong – 14% at Clitheroe and over 20% at Whalley and Ramsgrave & Wilpshire.

Our survey of 967 passengers on the route between Kirkham and Colne showed the extent of passenger dissatisfaction (matched by stakeholders'). The frequency of trains on the route ranked 13th. in their experience, as opposed to fourth in importance. Other results for timetable options given in our survey are:

| Option | in favour |
|---|-----------|
| Half-hourly frequency (Monday to Friday) | 66% |
| Half-hourly frequency (Saturday) | 57% |
| Faster journeys ⁴³ between major towns | 56% |
| Through trains to Manchester (all stations) | 63% |
| Through trains to Manchester (Fylde stations) | 76% |

Many agencies are working to address the problems and potential of this group of lines, and considerable effort was devoted to them in formulating options for the RUS. Some of those agencies are:

the East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership

⁴² Ibid. footnote 10

⁴³ Journeys at least ten to fifteen minutes faster were the majority requirement.

the South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership
the Clitheroe Line Community Rail Partnership
the North West Development Agency
Lancashire County Council
Burnley Borough Council
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

It is clear from our passenger research that there is demand for improvements on the lines – reinforced by the growing patronage. Passenger Focus believes that the way forward must be to combine all the interested stakeholders and funders to ensure that passengers get the best possible railway service.

We have grouped our response to the Roses options as follows:

6.3.1 Options R1a, 1b, R2, R4 (part), R4a, R5⁴⁴

Growth on the Clitheroe Line is higher than on the East Lancashire Line; we support, for the interim, the proposal to recommend option R1b, a half-hourly peak service to Clitheroe. In the longer term we believe that option R4a, an hourly semi-fast service linking Preston and Clitheroe could provide a range of additional services identified by passengers and stakeholders – half-hourly fast trains between Preston and Blackburn, and half-hourly trains between Blackburn and Clitheroe. The benefits of a through Preston to Clitheroe service are probably less, but would be worthwhile.

6.3.2 Options R3, R4 (part), R5, R8

The choice of option for the Roses Line proper is less clear. We note that studies of the stations in Burnley and the re-instatement of the Todmorden curve have been commissioned. Given the over-lap with the Yorkshire and Humber RUS, we believe that, in conjunction with all the relevant agencies, the decision regarding the preferred option for services in the Burnley to Todmorden/Hebden Bridge corridor should be made in that RUS.

6.3.3 Option R6

We note the decision regarding the proposals so eloquently, and persuasively, made by SELRAP.

6.3.4 Option R7

In view of the clear split in passenger priorities between the Blackpool South to Preston and Preston to Colne sections of the Blackpool South to Colne line, we believe that Northern should begin to consider the options now, rather than wait for the West Coast RUS. The plan for an additional Preston to Manchester service in the

⁴⁴ Also includes options R9a-c.

December 2008 timetable offers a convenient opportunity to link the Fylde Coast with Bolton and Manchester.

6.4 Preston to Ormskirk

Gaps - Regional Links, Commuter Demand

Despite the handicap of an irregular service, patronage of the Preston to Ormskirk line has grown by more than the average over the two years 2004/5 to 2006/7.⁴⁵ Interchange at Ormskirk, according to those statistics, more than doubled in the year to 2006/7. The expansion of Edge Hill University at Ormskirk – it now has over 17,000 students – is one reason for the growth in passenger numbers. As the service currently stands it provides a limited number of the journey opportunities required in the area. The most obvious gap is the lack of any direct rail link between Preston, and the range of destinations available from there, and Southport.

The gaps and options studied in the Lancashire and Cumbria RUS include some for re-instating some of the direct links that were formerly available, for example Ormskirk to Southport, but propose only indirect links between Preston and Southport, the largest markets. Passenger Focus suggests that research into the size of the flows between those places, and to places on the routes serving them, in comparison with the flows on links between Southport and Ormskirk should be undertaken before a final decision on new infrastructure is taken. If passenger numbers on a direct link between Preston and Southport would be greater than on the other possible new flows, the option at Burscough to rebuild the north to west curve should be re-examined. Congestion on the A565 and A59 between Southport and Preston is severe at peak times, and causes the timetabled 42 minutes off-peak journey time by the X2 bus to be extended to an hour. A direct rail link could offer a journey time of 40 minutes.

6.4.1 Option OP1

Passenger Focus agrees that this option should be included in the RUS, and implemented as quickly as resources allow. The recent passenger numbers show that demand for the route is growing. A standard pattern timetable, as well as being more attractive to passengers would also be easier to operate reliably. The infrastructure work required would be the basis for any enhancement needed for larger schemes. Planning for an hourly frequency should take account of the effect of an additional station at Midge Hall, proposed for re-opening by local pressure groups. Recent proposals for redeveloping the adjacent disused vehicle test track for housing have provided them with another reason for their campaign.

6.4.2 Options OP2, OP3, OP4, OP5, OP7

We do not believe that sufficient work has been done to identify the best option (see above). Therefore, we believe that no decision on these options can be made until it has.

⁴⁵ Ibid. footnote 10

6.4.3 Option OP6

Stakeholders continue to express a wish to see improvements to the Liverpool to Preston⁴⁶ via Wigan North Western service. Passenger Focus would support improvements to the present hourly service, which does not meet passengers' needs properly because it has to be "all things to all people". It is a semi-fast local service, an inter-regional link, a link to inter-city services and also a local service for Euxton and Leyland. We consider that the option should be developed for inclusion in the WCML RUS.

⁴⁶ Also to places beyond Preston in the North West and Scotland. See, for example, page 57 of "Modern Railways", July 2008.

6.5 Branch Lines

Gaps – Commuter Demand, Tourism, and Regional Links

Passenger Focus believes that “regional links” are a main gap for this grouping of lines.

6.5.1 Option BL1

Passenger Focus agrees that Option BL1 should not appear in the final RUS. Operating four additional services a day between Morecambe and Heysham to provide an hourly frequency in the peak, would not, given the geography of the Heysham/Morecambe conurbation, help to overcome the congestion experienced in the area. Far more useful for people in the area would be improved frequencies between Morecambe and Lancaster.

Connectivity with other forms of transport is important to passengers and ranks 12th out of 30 attributes nationally.⁴⁷ Stakeholders and passengers have remarked on the poor connections between train services and ferries at Heysham; in addition no trains connect to ferry services on winter Sundays or at night. The two daytime train services between Lancaster and Heysham are not timed as well as they could be to coincide with check-in for foot ferry passengers. We are pleased to note Northern’s proposals⁴⁸ to re-time the boat train and run it from/to Leeds. The times of train services are currently a barrier to passengers wishing to travel to Yorkshire on the Morecambe - Leeds services.

6.5.2 Options BL2a, BL2b, BL2c and BL3

Passengers rank good connections with other train services fifth out of 30 attributes and “sufficient train services at times when I use the train” as third.⁴⁹ It is therefore essential that connections and frequency of trains are optimised. Option BL2a does not offer this for passengers who want to travel between Morecambe, Lancaster, Carnforth, Skipton and Leeds; it places maximising unit and crew savings above providing good connections. Although option BL2b is a more cost effective option than BL2c and offers more frequent services than the existing timetable between Morecambe/Lancaster and Skipton (every 90 mins) it offers only connections at Skipton for passengers wanting to travel to Leeds and for passengers wanting to transfer to the Settle/Carlisle line.

One of the generic gaps identified by the RUS is that “inter/intra regional links are typically poor”; all the options identified for the Morecambe to Leeds line fail to improve those links. Interchange at Skipton will deter existing passengers and fail to attract new ones. The timetable option selected for the line must address the need

⁴⁷ *Rail Passengers’ Priorities for Improvements* Passenger Focus, July 2007

⁴⁸ Ibid. footnote 39

⁴⁹ Ibid. footnote 47

for it to be more productive and provide trains at times suitable for commuting to Lancaster as well as Leeds. The timetable should also provide trains later in the day.

Resourcing the first Leeds-bound train of the day from Skipton currently denies passengers a train suitable for commuting to Lancaster. Although Northern have not got a depot at Lancaster, their depot at Blackpool North is actually nearer to Lancaster than is their depot at Skipton, and should be used. Resourcing the line from both ends would facilitate a passenger-friendly timetable. Option BL3 should be addressed during the planning of the selected option for the line's timetable.

Passenger Focus does not support any option that reduces connectivity for passengers who use the route.

6.5.3 Option BL4

Passenger Focus believes that this option should appear in the final RUS and the timetable reworked to better meet passenger aspirations. Passenger Focus surveyed⁵⁰ 632 passengers on the Windermere Branch Line and whilst 77% said it was important for trains to have good connections into main line services at Oxenholme, 63% said they wanted through trains to avoid changing at Oxenholme. Of the 44% of passengers who found it inconvenient to change trains at Oxenholme 2/5ths had driven to Oxenholme to avoid this inconvenience. 71% felt it important that trains run on a clock face timetable and 80% wanted trains to be hourly.

The Lakes Line Rail User Group have noted:

“that there has been a notable reduction in usage of what used to be through trains with Manchester Airport, with passengers not interchanging trains at Oxenholme into/out of TPE’s Scottish trains. At the same time, passenger numbers overall have held up, with an increased local usage in line with national trends, compensating for the loss of those who used to travel further afield. We intend to conduct one of our week-long passenger counts in late spring 2009 when the new timetable has had time to ‘bed in’.”⁵¹

It has to be noted that TransPennine’s timetable planners have devoted a lot of energy in achieving the “best of all possible worlds”, but the WCML timetable at Oxenholme has significant problems to hinder their work, as it is far from a “standard pattern”. See section 5.9, Network capability and engineering access, for our comments on stakeholders’ aspirations for electrifying the line from Oxenholme to Windermere.

⁵⁰ Passenger Focus Route Specific research March 2008

⁵¹ e-mail from Lakes Line RUG, 12 June 2008

6.6 Miscellaneous Options

Gap – Interchange

The draft RUS refers to a number of stations known to have problems in terms of passenger circulation, which cause congestion and reduce accessibility.

6.6.1 Options MC1 and MC2

This option identifies congestion on Platforms 1 and 2 at Preston Station. These platforms are narrow and create conflict between passengers alighting from and boarding trains and the current site of the buffet near the footbridge stairs reduces circulation space where it is most in demand. Good facilities at stations are important to passengers, and in addition to relocating the buffet further down the platform away from the stairs, toilet facilities should be provided on these platforms. In *Barriers to Interchange*, a report published by the RPC North Western England in February 2005, 94% of passengers interviewed stated that toilets were “essential” or “important”, but only 53% were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the toilet facilities. Passenger Focus believes the alterations would be most welcome.

Preston station is in need of a major uplift. 3,481,215 passengers entered and exited this station last year, an increase of 172,000 passengers on the previous year’s figures. In addition, 1,202,667⁵² used the station as an interchange. The stairs and footbridges are outdated and provide insufficient capacity. There are no escalators, no first class lounge and inadequate toilet facilities. There are no passenger facilities on platforms 5 and 6 – not even a waiting shelter, forcing passengers to wait in a cold draughty environment. Many long-distance and busy inter-regional trains call at these platforms. We recommend that the Final RUS includes option MC2 and that the West Coast RUS develops this option more fully.

The RUS should consider options for Preston station that can be incorporated in stakeholders’ aspirations for a thorough refreshing of the whole station as a “gateway” to the city of Preston. The following items from the Preston City Vision website⁵³ are typical of the reasons advanced for bringing Preston station to a standard fit for its importance.

- The City’s thriving economy sustains strong service and high value added manufacturing sectors.
- The headquarters of Lancashire County Council are based in the City, along with the county’s crown courts and a wide range of regional offices of public agencies, banks, insurance and other professional bodies.
- Preston’s dynamic aerospace and high tech engineering industry demonstrates the status of the Lancashire region as the biggest centre of aerospace production excellence in the UK. Comprising around 140 companies and employing 30,000 highly skilled people, it ranks alongside other world-class centres like Seattle in the USA or Toulouse in France.

⁵² Ibid. footnote 10

⁵³ <http://www.preston-city.com/multiplicity>

- In terms of productivity, Preston's GVA has grown by 40% since 1990. Total GVA was estimated at £2.6billion in 2004 and information suggests a further positive trend in GVA growth rate and impact, given the shift towards a knowledge driven economy.
- Since 1998 there has been strong employment growth of almost 10% in Preston, compared to 8.5% in NW Region and 7.5 nationally. (ONS - Annual Business Inquiry 2004)
- Between 1998 and 2004 there was significant sectoral employment growth in: education (+39%), public administration & defence (+34%) and other business services (+21%). ONS - Annual Business Inquiry 2004)

The RUS should begin the process of creating a station fit for purpose as a gateway to Central Lancashire and the Fylde Coast.

6.6.2 Options MC3, MC4 and MC6

Passenger Focus recommends options MC3, 4 and 6 be included in the strategy. Good access is essential for all passengers and especially so for passengers with disabilities, young children, heavy luggage or who have mobility problems. Lifts and/or escalators should be available at all major stations where step-free access to platforms is not available.

1,367,675 passengers used Carlisle station in 2006/07, 1,051,142 used Blackburn and 733,381 used Ormskirk station.⁵⁴ Improvements to these stations would offer benefits to a significant number of passengers. Passenger satisfaction at Blackburn could be quickly increased by reverting to operating the station as it was until recently, with eastbound trains using platform one, and westbound using platform two, that is, either side of the main platform, with its large canopy, booking office and other facilities.

Even when access to the station and between platforms may be Disability Discrimination Act compliant, in many cases - especially along the Cumbrian Coast Route - the platform levels are too low, making the step up onto or down from the train inaccessible for many people. In a recent survey⁵⁵ of Dalton Station 72% of the 317 respondents cited the big drop to the platform as an issue for them. The report quotes a passenger:

"I am scared of getting off the train Barrow side of the track. I am 75"

Many people avoid using the station altogether preferring to travel to Barrow, Ulverston or Oxenholme to access train services.

Passenger Focus believes that the final RUS should include a review of all station platform heights in Lancashire and Cumbria and the development of a fully costed plan for raising platforms at stations where low platforms are a barrier to people joining train services. Increased patronage at off-peak times would result, and social inclusion would be improved. We believe this is an area that could be considered for

⁵⁴ Ibid. footnote 10

⁵⁵ The Furness Line Action group Survey of the Usage of Dalton Station, September 2007

joint funding from a variety of funding bodies including Access for All, North West Development Agency, the Government Office for the North West. The large number of platforms of below-standard height in the RUS area requires effective action. We suggest that a joint venture between Network Rail and bodies such as those listed above, with a rolling programme of improvements covering lines station by station, would be the most economical way to remove this particular “gap”.

6.6.3 Option MC5

Passenger Focus agrees that this option should be included in the final RUS. Shelter from the elements for passengers waiting for trains is very important. A waiting shelter was classed as the second most important station facility that passengers wanted in our route specific research in both Lancashire and Cumbria.⁵⁶ 39% of the 967 passengers responding to our survey on the East Lancashire Route and 37% of the 899 passengers responding to our survey on the Cumbrian Coastal Route wanted a waiting shelter on their platform. Passenger Focus recommends that the RUS includes a commitment to provide a waiting shelter on exposed platforms wherever possible.

6.6.4 Option MC7

Passenger Focus recommends that this option is included in the final RUS. With expected growth of passenger numbers on the West Coast Main Line, it is essential to ensure that potential problems are addressed. One of these problems is the issue of the number of freight trains and passenger trains passing through Carlisle station. There is also the potential for severe delays when either freight or passenger trains fail and block the line, are delayed by problems on the line or during planned maintenance causing severe disruption. Reinstatement of the avoiding lines would create a diversionary route for freight trains, and also passenger services when routes through the station are blocked, reducing delays and thus improving services.

6.6.5 Option MC8

Passenger Focus would wish to see this option included in the final RUS. Many people living in and around Carlisle use public services located in Newcastle, particularly hospitals. Improving commuter services between Carlisle and Newcastle would also benefit these people. Passenger Focus questioned 899 passengers on the Cumbrian Coast Route and of these, 47% wanted improved services to Newcastle.

⁵⁶ Ibid. footnote 5

7. Summary table of Passenger Focus' responses to RUS options

| Option | Consider further | Passenger Focus opinion |
|--------|--|-------------------------|
| C1 | Yes | agree |
| C2 | Yes | agree |
| C3a | Yes, with further development | agree |
| C3b | No | agree |
| C4 | Yes | agree |
| C5a | With review | agree |
| C5b | With review | agree |
| C5c | With review | agree |
| C5d | With review | agree |
| C6 | Yes | reluctantly agree |
| C7a | No, but later review | disagree |
| C7b | No, but later review | disagree |
| C7c | No, but later review | disagree |
| C8 | Yes | reluctantly agree |
| C9 | Yes | reluctantly agree |
| S1 | No | disagree |
| S2 | Develop further | agree |
| S3 | Long-term | agree |
| S4 | Develop further | agree |
| S5 | Yes | agree |
| S6 | Develop further | agree |
| R1a | No | agree |
| R1b | "Recommend" | agree |
| R2 | No | agree |
| R3 | Pass to Northern, or to Y&H RUS | agree |
| R4 | No, Northern or Y&H RUS may develop further. | agree |
| R4a | No, Northern or Y&H RUS may develop further. | agree |
| R5 | No, Northern or Y&H RUS may develop further. | agree |
| R6 | No, but note possibility of outside funding. | agree |

| Option | Consider further | Passenger Focus opinion |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| R7 | No, pass to WC RUS or Northern. | Partially agree |
| R8 | No, but others may wish to develop. | agree |
| R9a | Yes | agree |
| R9b | Yes | agree |
| R9c | Yes | agree |
| OP1 | Yes | agree |
| OP2 | Develop further. | disagree |
| OP3 | Yes | disagree |
| OP4 | No | disagree |
| OP5 | No | agree |
| OP6 | No | Should be passed to WC RUS |
| OP7 | No | agree |
| BL1 | No | agree |
| BL2a | No | agree |
| BL2b | Develop further. | disagree |
| BL2c | No | agree |
| BL3 | No | disagree |
| BL4 | Develop further. | agree |
| MC1 | Yes | agree |
| MC2 | Pass to WC RUS | agree |
| MC3 | Develop further. | agree |
| MC4 | Develop further. | agree |
| MC5 | Yes | agree |
| MC6 | Develop further. | disagree |
| MC7 | Pass to WC RUS | agree |
| MC8 | No | disagree |

Appendix A: List of Consultees

Passenger Focus sent out letters to the following, inviting them to comment on the Draft for Consultation, and reminding them that they could send their comments to Network Rail.

Railway supporter groups

Copeland Rail Users Group
Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line
Furness Line Action Group
Lakes Line RUG
Lancaster and Skipton RUG
Lancaster Morecambe & District RUG
Leeds – Morecambe CRP
OPSTA (Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers Association)
Rail Future North West
Ribble Valley Rail
SELRAP (Skipton East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership)
Settle and Carlisle Railway Development Company
Silverdale station supporter
STELLA (Support the East Lancashire Line Association)
TravelWatch NorthWest

MPs

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Tony Cunningham | Workington |
| Eric Martlew | Carlisle |
| David Maclean | Penrith & The Border |
| Jamie Reed | Copeland |
| Tim Farron | Westmorland & Lonsdale |
| William Hague | Richmond Yorks |
| David Curry | Skipton and Ripon |
| John Hutton | Barrow & Furness |
| Geraldine Smith | Morecambe & Lunesdale |
| Ben Wallace | Lancaster & Wyre |
| Nigel Evans | Ribble Valley |
| Mark Hendrick | Preston |
| David Borrow | South Ribble |
| Lindsay Hoyle | Chorley |
| Gordon Prentice | Pendle |
| Kitty Ussher | Burnley |
| Greg Pope | Hyndburn |
| Paul Rowen | Rochdale |
| Christine McCafferty | Calder Valley |

Appendix B: Bibliography

- “Baseline Report Cumbrian Coast Railway Carlisle – Barrow” Cumbria County Council March, 2007
- “City Links: Integration and Isolation” Centre for Cities March, 2008
- “Community Strategy 2007” Northern Rail Ltd.
- Correspondence from Copeland Rail Users Group to Northern and Network Rail July, 2007
- “Delivering a Sustainable Railway” DfT July, 2007
- “Getting to the station” Passenger Focus March, 2007
- “Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Study” TAS for Lancashire CC August, 2007
- North West Rail Investment Campaign North West Rail Priorities Final Technical Report JMP Consulting November, 2005
- “North West Regional Planning Assessment for the Railway” DfT October, 2006
- “North West Route Utilisation Strategy” Network Rail May, 2007
- “Northern Review Final Report” SDG
- “Passengers’ priorities for improvements in rail services – 2007” MVA for Passenger Focus
- “Review of Community Rail Development Strategy” DfT March, 2007
- “RSS Annual Monitoring Report for the North West of England” NWRA Monitoring Team February, 2008
- “Rural Railways” House of Commons Transport Committee Vol. 1 Fifth Report of Session 2004-5
- “Taking the Train” Settle-Carlisle Railway Business Liaison Group July, 1994.
- “The Furness Line Action Group Survey of the Usage of Dalton Station” FLAG September, 2007

Appendix C: Sample Questionnaire

Cumbrian Coast

Thank you again for agreeing to take part in this short survey being conducted by Continental Research on behalf of Passenger Focus. Passenger Focus is the official independent consumer organisation representing the interests of rail users nationally. We would like to hear your views on the service provided on this route. It should take no more than five minutes to complete. Any answer you give will be treated in confidence in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Market Research Society. The interviewer will collect this questionnaire from you when you have completed it or please use the post paid envelope provided to send it back to us. If you have any queries the interviewer will be pleased to help.

TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS PLEASE TICK THE BOX NEXT TO THE ANSWER(S) THAT APPLY OR WRITE IN YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED. UNLESS THE QUESTION ALLOWS YOU TO TICK SEVERAL ANSWERS PLEASE JUST TICK ONE BOX PER QUESTION.

Your Journey Today

Q1 Please fill in the scheduled departure time of the train from the station where you boarded. Use the 24 hr clock e.g. 17.25

Q2 Please write in the name of the station where you boarded this train:

Q3 Please write in the name of the station where you are travelling to on this train:

Q4 How did you travel to the station where you boarded this train? (Tick all that apply)

On foot /walking

Tram / Light Rail (inc. Metrolink)

Bicycle (parked at or near station)

Bicycle (taken onto train)

Taxi

Car parked at or near station

Motorbike

Car – dropped off

Bus / Coach

Air/Sea

National Rail train

If National Rail train: please specify station you travelled from

Q5 How will you travel to your final destination after leaving this train? (Tick all that apply)

On foot /walking

Tram / Light Rail (inc. Metrolink)

Bicycle (parked at or near station)

Taxi

Bicycle (taken onto train)

Car parked at or near station

Motorbike

Car - dropped ...off

Bus / Coach

Air/Sea

National Rail train

If National Rail train: please specify station you will travel onto

Q6 What is the main purpose of your rail journey?

Daily commuting to / from work

Less regular commuting to / from work

Daily commuting for education (to/from college/school/university)

Less regular commuting for education (to/from college/school/university)

On company business (or own if self employed)

Shopping trip

Visiting friends or relatives

Sport / entertainment

A day out

Travel to / from holiday

On personal business (job interview, dentist etc)

Other

Q7 If you had not made this journey by train today, what other modes could you have used? (Tick all that apply)

On foot /walking

Taxi

Bicycle

Car as a driver

Motorbike

Car as a passenger

Bus / Coach

Air/Sea

Tram / Light Rail (inc. Metrolink)

No alternative

Other : please specify

Q8 Why did you choose to travel by train for this journey? (Tick all that apply)

Train is more reliable

Speed / faster than alternatives

Train is the most direct / sensible route

No reasonable route by other public transport Comfort

Availability / cost of parking

No access to car

Cost

Rail station near home / destination

Other : please specify

Q9 How many times have you made this journey in the last two weeks?

(Please note that if you make a return journey that would count as two journeys)

This is my first journey

2-5

6-10

11-20

21+

Q10 What is the rail station nearest to your home? (Please write in name)

Q11 Which three of the following are the most important facilities to have at this station?

(Please tick up to three)

Car parking

Bicycle parking

No step between trains and platforms

Waiting shelter

Waiting room

Staff at the station

Information board showing timetables, local buses, taxis, etc

Accurate information as to when trains will actually arrive

Announcements about train departure and delays

A help point

A clock

Security cameras (CCTV)

Other : please specify

Q12 How often do you think trains should run on this route?

Every hour

Every 90 minutes

Every two hours

Other frequency : please specify

Q13 Do you need trains to run earlier in the morning than at present on this route?

Yes

No

No opinion

Q14 Do you need trains to run later in the evening than at present on this route?

Yes

No

No opinion

Q15 Would you prefer:

(A) Trains that run at regular times past the hour (e.g. 1030, 1130 etc) Go to Q17

OR

(B) Trains that connect with intercity trains at Carlisle and Lancaster Go to Q16

Q16 If you chose (B), trains that connect, please indicate the maximum amount of time in minutes that you would be prepared to wait for the connection (Please write in minutes)

Q17 Would you use through trains to any of the following destinations:

Newcastle

Yes No Don't know

Lancaster

Yes No Don't know

Preston

Yes No Don't know

Q18 Would you use a Sunday service which ran between Carlisle and Barrow?

Yes Go to Q19

No Go to Q20

Don't know

Go to Q20

Q19 How frequent should the Sunday service be?

Every hour

Every 90 minutes

Every two hours

Other frequency: please specify

Q20 If available, would you like to be able to buy tickets for this route from your local shops?

Yes No Don't know

Q21 Would a ticket valid for five journeys be useful to you?

Yes No Don't know

Q22 Would it be useful to have tickets sent to your mobile phone (you would show the message as proof of purchase)?

Yes No Don't know

Q23a Would you buy a railcard which offered discounts to local residents?

Yes Go to Q23b

No Go to Q24

Depends on price Go to Q23b

Don't know Go to Q24.

Q23b If you paid the following amount for an annual railcard, what percentage of discount on the price of the ticket would you expect?

£5 would want % discount

£10 would want % discount

£15 would want % discount

£20 would want % discount

Q24 Please tick which of the following, if any, is the main reason limiting your use of this line? (Please tick just one box)

Low platforms

No trains on Sunday

Trains not frequent enough

Shortage of parking spaces

Train services not reliable

Trains too crowded

Personal security

Nothing limiting my use of this line

Other factor: please specify

Your Expectations

Q25 Before you started your journey today, what level of service did you EXPECT TO GET? Please rate your expectation for each of the following aspects of the station and train given what you know about this line and train travel on similar routes.

Ticket buying facilities

Personal security at the station

Provision of information about train times / platforms

Connections with other forms of transport

Ease of getting to/ from the station

Frequency of the trains on the route

Punctuality / reliability of the train Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)

Value for money for price of ticket

Being able to get a seat on the train

Personal security while on board the train

Not having to change trains on your journey
The ease of being able to get on and off the train

OVERALL EXPECTATION OF SERVICE

Your Experience

Q26 Thinking now about the level of service you actually experienced on your journey on this route today, please rate what you experienced at the station and on the train?

Ticket buying facilities
Personal security at the station
Provision of information about train times / platforms
Connections with other forms of transport
Ease of getting to/ from the station
Frequency of the trains on the route
Punctuality / reliability of the train
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take (speed)
Value for money for price of ticket
Being able to get a seat on the train
Personal security while on board the train
Not having to change trains on your journey
The ease of being able to get on and off the train

OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF SERVICE poor

Importance of Aspects of Rail Travel

Q27 Thinking now about each of the different aspects of your journey, please rate how important each of the following is to you.

Ticket buying facilities
Personal security at the station
Provision of information about train times / platforms
Connections with other forms of transport
Ease of getting to/ from the station
Frequency of the trains on the route
Punctuality / reliability of the train
Length of time the journey was scheduled to take speed)
Value for money for price of ticket
Being able to get a seat on the train
Personal security while on board the train
Not having to change trains on your journey
The ease of being able to get on and off the train

About You

Q28 What is your employment status?
Work full time (30+ hours) Retired Work part time (9-29 hours)
Student Not employed - seeking work
Other

Q29 Which age group do you fall into?

Under 16 16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-59 60-64 65+

Q30 Are you.....

Male/Female

Q31 Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

White Chinese Black or Black British Asian or Asian British Mixed

Other ethnic group

Q32 Do you have a disability or long term illness related to the following: (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

Mobility Speech impairment Wheelchair user Learning difficulties Hearing Eyesight

None

Q33 What type of ticket did you use for your journey?

First Class Single / Return

Standard Single / Return

Cheap Day Single / Return

Group Save ticket

Saver / SuperSaver

Apex / Super Apex

One Day Travelcard

First Class Season ticket (weekly / monthly / annual / Travelcard)

Standard Season ticket (weekly / monthly / Rail Staff Pass / Privilege ticket / Police annual / Travelcard seasons)

A special promotion ticket

Holiday package / tour ticket

Other : Please specify

Q34 Did you use a railcard to buy your ticket?

Yes No

Thank you for your help in completing this research.

Please hand it back to the interviewer or use the post paid envelope to return the questionnaire to us.

This survey was conducted under the terms of the MRS Code of Conduct. All answers you provide are entirely confidential and will be combined with those of all other passengers who take part in the research. If you would like to confirm our credentials, please call the MRS freephone on 0500 396999.

The information collected will be used to represent the best interests of passengers along this route. The information will be used purely for research and planning future services.