

Minutes

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Transport Focus Special Board meeting	
Date:	9 January 2018
Location	St Bride Foundation, Bride Lane, Fleet St, London

Attended

Board members:

Jeff Halliwell	JH	Chair
Marian Lauder MBE	ML	Board member
Isabel Liu	IL	Board member
Theo de Pencier	TdP	Board member
Philip Mendelsohn	PM	Board member for Scotland
William Powell	WP	Board member for Wales
Arthur Leathley	AL	Board member for London

Executives in attendance:

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief executive
Ian Wright	IW	Head of insight
Mike Hewitson	MH	Head of policy and issues
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of transport strategy
Jon Carter	JC	Head of business services
Sara Nelson	SN	Head of communications
Michelle Calvert	MCa	Management assistant to the CEO and Chair
Linda McCord	LM	Senior stakeholder manager
David Sidebottom	DS	Transport user director

Guest Speakers:

Becky Lumlock	BL	Route managing director, Wessex, Network Rail
Andy Mellors	AM	Managing director, South Western Railway

Members of the public:

Approximately 10 members of the public attended the meeting.

1.0 Chairman's update

The Chair welcomed attendees to the Special Board meeting and thanked AM and BL for presenting. He congratulated South Western Railway (SWR) on winning the franchise and noted Network Rail's (NR) transformation of Waterloo, a major piece of engineering work in the UK's busiest station.

2.0 Andy Mellors, Managing Director, South Western Railway Becky Lumlock, Route Managing Director, Wessex, Network Rail

2.1 Performance

2.1.1 Post-August Waterloo upgrade work

BL thanked Transport Focus for its cooperation in the August Waterloo works, which had resulted in 97% passenger awareness and 79% of passengers having been supportive or very supportive of the work done. Platforms 1 to 4 had been extended and platforms 5 to 8 reconfigured. There would be a 30% increase in capacity at Waterloo during peak times, the equivalent of 45,000 extra passengers. Post-August interlocking flank work had been completed in November.

AM added that the ability to make use of 10-car platforms had been contingent on the use of class 707 rolling stock, of which more than 100 were now in service. This represented a better customer environment and train performance, with a cascade effect felt elsewhere in the suburban fleet.

2.1.2 Recent performance

BL acknowledged that performance had not been where NR had wanted it to be. August had been difficult due to a reduction in infrastructure, but performance had improved by October. Major incidents in Waterloo and Vauxhall had affected performance from 11 December to 13 December; work was underway to avoid such incidents and improve future responses. The NR delay minute split had performed above target since the disruption of the August works.

2.1.3 Performance improvement work

BL noted the implementation of a new joint SWR/NR senior incident officer organisation, with 24/7 incident officers to be solely responsible for incident recovery from January 2018. Emergency intervention units were also being doubled, and six service delivery controllers introduced alongside a four times per day drumbeat. As well as an enhancement of response team capabilities, there would be a complete SWR/NR Wessex Alliance review of the JPIP process. Intelligent infrastructure was meanwhile being deployed and its interventions were surpassing expectations.

AM stated that the SWR Siemens fleet was undergoing significant overhaul activity. Modifications were needed to the class 455 traction equipment software and the class 458 door system. The class 707s would lead to additional capacity but some software updates would be required. Training was being undertaken, and a new dwell time app had been launched.

2.2 T-12: provision of information

AM recalled that SWR had inherited a position of franchise enhancement non-compliant with T-12. Initial short term resource had been parachuted in to help deal with such challenges. A degree of re-planning had been needed in relation to delivery of 707s. There had been a 60% increase in workload during 2017-2018 as well as industrial action challenges. However, a NR/SWR Forward Plan had been jointly agreed alongside a number of actions following a 22 December meeting with the Milton Keynes system operator team.

2.3 Compensation – process, awareness, resourcing

The introduction of Delay Repay (DR) had been a franchise obligation, with SWR moving to a 15-minute threshold on 1 December. SWR DR claims were initially handled by JourneyCheck with escalations handled by SWR's own customer service centre. Claims could be submitted online or in hard copy, with the majority submitted online. The franchise had targeted automated DR by spring 2019, which required a transition to the Rail Delivery Group central back office; this migration would take place later in January. The typical duration from DR claim to payment was between two and three weeks. DR had been promoted to customers by way of republishing the Passenger's Charter, on-train announcements, social media campaigns, and emails to season ticket holders.

2.4 Industrial relations

SWR had been consistent in its position that there ought to be new ways of operating suburban trains. The franchise wanted to keep a second person on trains; discussions centred on where guards were not available at short notice. SWR had been hit by strike action, with further strikes planned for 10 January and 12 January. There was however a growing team of over 250 contingency guards.

2.5 Questions and answers

JH noted that customers had just seen a fare increase above inflation and average earnings, and asked when there would be an improvement in service quality. AM replied that additional capacity had been installed on 11 December. The process of lengthening trains ought also to be a significant performance enabler in reducing stations' dwell time. BL added that while it was difficult to put a date on such improvements, a Chief Operating

Officer had recently been brought into her team to focus solely on maintenance, and intelligent infrastructure was starting to show returns.

TdP raised concerns about 'skip stopping' and asked if the decision to pass through certain stations represented a policy shift within SWR. AM replied that there had not been a policy change since 20 August. Such decisions were taken only where necessary at the joint control centre in Basingstoke. The ability to get services back to timetable was important in reducing customer perturbation. Withdrawn stops were also recorded as PPM failures. BL noted that, when running with reduced infrastructure in August, the franchise had decided to take a hit on its train performance figures by continuing to run services; this had been the right thing to do for passengers.

ML noted that SWR had scored second-to-bottom in recent Transport Focus research into T-12 data. She asked how confident the franchise was in meeting its T-12 obligations. GD cited an example of the line closure between Eastleigh and Southampton not showing on the company's website. AM replied that the franchise had outlined a way forward with the Milton Keynes team following the meeting of 22 December by prioritising timetable submissions more appropriately.

AL noted that some customers had reported being told to complain to the operator from which they bought tickets rather than SWR. Further, he queried SWR's ambition in reducing its DR response period of two to three weeks. AM replied that the inherited complaints position had not been where the franchise would have liked. Additional resource had since been put into the Southampton customer service centre. In the week before Christmas, over 95% of complaints had been responded to within 20 working days. There was however a link between where passengers bought tickets and the channels by which they had to seek compensation. Regarding DR, changes to the online system later in the month – with the goal of moving to an automated system – would drive down response time, but there was no target as yet.

IL asked about the franchise's handling of industrial disputes. AM replied that SWR had planned to run over 60% of its services during strike action on 8 November and 9 November; in the event, it had run 67% to 68%. New Year's Eve had not been directly comparable due to its being a Sunday service, but around 75% of trains had been running, including parts of the service that had not been running during the November action. During yesterday's strike, the franchise had run over 70% of its services, including on the Isle of Wight. In addition, more contingency guards had elected to come into work. If the dispute were to continue beyond April, RMT would have to re-ballot its members. The franchise was running a 'hearts and minds' campaign, reiterating that it wanted to keep a second person on the train, protect pay and conditions, and hire more guards.

WP asked about the franchise's communications during disruption, which he felt could be expressed in plainer English. AM replied that, following customer messaging research carried out by the previous franchise, policy had not changed since 20 August. Any review

needed to be an objective assessment rather than based on anecdotal evidence. He and BL had jointly commissioned an external review into all aspects of the 11 December incident, including communication.

PM noted that a number of the franchise commitments, such as smart cards, centred on technology. He was concerned that passengers must be able to understand what was best for them. AM replied that this was a valid point. The franchise had a number of ambitious plans and communicating them to customers needed to be at the forefront of its mind.

The Chair thanked AM and BL for their presentation and responses. It was clear that the franchise was working hard to deliver improvements. He noted that the passenger satisfaction survey would be released at the end of the month. He was pleased to see a joined-up approach from SWR and NR, and stressed that Transport Focus would continue to work constructively with the industry.

3.0 Private session resolution

The board was asked to **RESOLVE** that, pursuant to the statutory provisions governing procedure, members of the public shall be excluded from the meeting for the items set out below having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted:

3.1 Approval of SRUS contract; and

3.2 Motorway Services Users Survey 2018 (MSUS)

The resolution was proposed by Theo de Pencier and seconded by Philip Mendelsohn. The Chair signed the resolution.

The public session concluded and all members of the public left the room.

4.0 Any other business

There being no further business, this part of the meeting concluded at 11.30.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

Jeff Halliwell
Chair, Transport Focus

Date