



Special Board meeting

Date:	19 June 2018
Location	Piccadilly Gate, Manchester

Attended

Board members:

Jeff Halliwell	JH	Chair
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

Apologies

Arthur Leathley	AL	Board member for London
Marian Lauder MBE	ML	Board adviser

Executive in attendance:

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief executive
Nigel Holden	NH	Corporate services director
Jon Carter	JC	Head of board and governance
Jordan Sargeant	JS	Stakeholder manager
Louise Collins	LC	Senior stakeholder manager
Kate O'Reilly	KOR	Contact team manager
Kieran Watkins	KW	Senior communications officer
Miriam Cummings	MC	Communications assistant
Yvonne Fox-Burmyby	YFB	Transport user team coordinator

Guest Speakers:

David Brown	DB	Managing director, Northern
Leo Goodwin	LG	Managing director, TransPennine Express
Patrick Cawley	PC	Director of route sponsorship, Network Rail

Members of the public:

Approximately 40 members of the public attended the meeting, along with many journalists and camera crews.

He explained that in April 2017, the planning process for this year's summer timetable had begun. Things appeared to be on track until January 2018, including 1500 fully trained drivers in place – enough to operate the whole of the planned May timetable. Then, on 5 January, Northern were told that the electrification schemes, upon which the major changes to the timetable were based, would not be delivered by the date of the timetable change. As a contingency measure, and it being too late to plan a robust, brand new timetable – Northern decided to roll over the December timetable into May. Network Rail, however, refused. Thus, there was only a period of 16 weeks to come up with a workable timetable solution instead of the usual 40 weeks.

The electrification of the Preston – Blackpool route was completed 3 weeks late. This delay had the effect of meaning to all intents and purposes this was now a 'new' route, with 450 drivers having to have significantly more time to retrain and 'learn the route' than anticipated. The timetable that they had to plan was not what they wanted – there are serious, structural deficiencies with some stations and interchanges. The additional re-training requirements would not, of course, be needed for the final timetable.

It had only proved possible to start to communicate with passengers in the first weeks of the new timetable. The interim timetable went live on 4 June, having consulted with DfT and TfN. The primary aims were to stabilise the service, provide certainty to passengers, and continue with driver training. This would buy time to deal with the structural deficiencies as the new timetable emerges.

2.3 Issues and actions: TransPennine Express

Leo Goodwin (LG) also apologised for the disruption to TransPennine Express services. He fully appreciated that journeys matter and when they don't work, people's lives are disrupted. He recalled that DB already covered the sequence of events that led up to the crisis. Going forward, he believed it was not a question of apportioning blame, rather the industry finding a solution together.

2.4 Issues and actions: Network Rail

Patrick Cawley (PC) on behalf of Network Rail also made it clear that he was very sorry for the disruption that had been caused.

Bolton to Manchester / Preston electrification had proved to be a very complex project. In linear terms it was a 13km building site, which had to accommodate an operational railway. It had also involved the use of huge tunnel boring machines (the biggest since the channel tunnel was dug) with many cases of troublesome ground works, largely as a result of abandoned mineworkings. This had challenged Network Rail technically, and it had realised in December that it could not possibly deliver by the May timetable change. The principal contractor had been Carillion – NR had had

infrastructure works being complete by the autumn.

Cllr William Powell (WP) noted that effective passenger information was critical, both online and at stations. It was abundantly clear that the industry had failed to communicate effectively in run up to timetable change. Why was this the case, and what learning for the future was there? DB agreed that in the run up to the timetable change they had been nowhere near the 12 weeks informed traveller requirement, as they simply couldn't produce a timetable that would work. They had ultimately made a decision to push out timetables as pdfs via their website, although clearly this was no good for advance planning by passengers. Many stations had indeed been very badly effected by short notice cancellations; staff were also in a difficult situation as they didn't know what trains were running either. Northern had needed to wait until there was an interim plan before they could communicate effectively; this was not ideal, but better than simply acknowledging there was a problem, with no plan in place.

WP was also concerned about vulnerable passengers; what was happening here? LG replied that TPE had invested in staff training, and staff were now out looking to help rather than just waiting to react. DB and PC said similar arrangements had been made at stations for which they were responsible.

Philip Mendelsohn (PM) asked how the operators were planning to restore trust between the industry and its stakeholders, none of whom – including Transport Focus – had been forewarned of the crisis. Why should anyone believe anything you tell us in future? DB said he had written on 16 May to the north of England's key stakeholders saying problems were emerging, but he wasn't at that point aware of the enormity of the problems. Going forward, compensation arrangements were essential, and as previously mentioned, these were being discussed with DfT, making sure the interim timetable was robust, and effective planning and delivery of the summer timetable later in the year. LG thought the industry was working hard on all of this; there was lots of investment going into infrastructure and new trains, so that passengers will see a huge difference and help turn perceptions of the service around.

JH asked two questions received via Twitter. 'Greg' asked if Northern would be trying to wriggle out of paying compensation like they did on delay repay. DB replied that there had been no wriggling – Northern had already paid out over £1m in the first year of the franchise. 'Toby' asked how TPE can justify a third fare rise in less than a year when service is so bad? LG said that TPE had introduced many different fares, including a range of discounted tickets, to ensure the overall fares basket remained appealing.

Other questions from members of the public covered the following topics:

- Upper Calder valley, particularly Hebden, and commuters from there to Huddersfield; journeys now take over an hour due to poor connections at

3.0 Project approval: tram passenger survey

The Board considered the Tram Passenger Survey proposal which, notwithstanding its financial value (meaning it would not normally go the board for approval) was considered by the management team to be sufficiently important to seek the boards views on.

The board **approved** the proposal with the following caveats:

- Third party funding streams must be explored with greater energy. It is clearly worth doing, but cannot be funded after this year, so a medium-term funding plan is now urgent
- Best value may be better realised outwith a formal tendering process, and if so, just get on with it. Tendering and set up costs, if tendered, may be quite disproportionate to the value of the contract.

4.0 Any other business

JH put on record the Board's thanks to everyone involved in putting together today's meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 1448.

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting:

J Halliwell

Jeff Halliwell
Chair, Transport Focus

17/07/2018

Date