

# **Transport Focus Board Meeting: minutes**

Date	Wednesday 29 March 2023
Time	0945-1300
Venue	Piccadilly Gate, Manchester
Classification	Not protectively marked

# <u>Attended</u>

#### **Board members**

NS	Chair
WP	Board member for Wales
KD	Board member
KR	Board member
TdP	Board member
RW	Board member
AL	Board member for London
ТМ	Board member for Scotland
	WP KD KR TdP RW AL

# Management and other staff in attendance

Anthony Smith	AS	Chief Executive
Jon Carter	JC	Head of Board and Governance
Guy Dangerfield	GD	Head of Strategy
David Beer	DB	Senior Manager Wales
Michelle Roles	MR	Stakeholder Manager Wales
Colette Gill	MM	Senior Communications Officer
Keith Bailey	KB	Senior Insight Advisor

#### **Guests and speakers**

Vernon Everitt	VE	Transport Commissioner, Greater Manchester
Stephen Rhodes	SR	Director Bus TfGM
Richard Nickson	RN	Programme Director, Cycling and Walking
Lucy Kennon	LK	Head of Resilience and Business Continuity
Guillaume Chanussot	GC	Managing Director Keolis Amey Metrolink
Bruce Parker	BP	Head of Planning and Development,
		Operations NW, National Highways
Peter Boulton	PB	Head of Highways, TfGM
Andy Mellors	AM	Managing Director, Avanti West Coast
Nick Donvan	ND	Managing Director, Northern
Matthew Golton	MG	Managing Director, Transpennine Express

LB

# Event production team

Luke Bodin

Director, BA Events



Members of the public:	Around 30 stakeholders /members of the public attended in
	person, and 632 logged into the proceedings live streamed,
	of which 372 watched most of the meeting.
Apologies	None

#### Part A Public Affairs

# 1 Chair's welcome and opening remarks; apologies and introductions; declarations of conflicts of interest.

Nigel Stevens (NS) opened the meeting and thanked those present and viewing online for joining. He noted that the meeting would be focusing on the North West and Manchester in particular and issues facing passengers across the region.

The meeting was a formal Board meeting, and as such some formal Board business was to be discussed at the end of proceedings.

No declarations of conflicts of interest were made.

#### 2 Overview of current work at Transport Focus

David Sidebottom (DS) summarised the work and research Transport Focus is doing on behalf of transport users across Greater Manchester, working in a critical friend capacity with Greater Manchester and local operators. The new bus passenger satisfaction survey has now been launched. For a few years now Transport Focus has had a seat on the Greater Manchester Transport Board, filled by DS currently. DS expressed Transport Focus' keenness to develop our approach of "can we do more to help as the voice of the passenger across Greater Manchester"

NS introduced, and thanked Vernon Everitt for attending, to give the keynote address.

#### 3 Keynote address: Vernon Everitt, Transport Commissioner, Greater Manchester

Vernon Everitt explained the vision and plans for the city region's transport strategy bringing together all modes of public transport and active travel to encourage more people to use them. The region's transformational Bee Network would also integrate fares, ticketing and information, delivering and enabling more jobs, businesses, homes and social inclusion.

He believed there is a large and continuously growing market to attract, with approx. 1 million journeys a day that could switch over to public transport or active travel. The £2 bus fare cap was discussed, contributing to the 10% increase in bus patronage between September and December 2022, estimating that around 5% of that increase was due to the £2 flat fee.



It was explained that franchising will happen in 3 tranches across Greater Manchester, starting on the 24th September 2023 (NW Manchester) with 50 zero emission buses. March 2024 will see the NE of Greater Manchester have their services franchised, with the remaining areas completed by January 2025. On rail, TfGM is currenly looking at which local suburban rail services might be integrated into the Bee network by 2030.

It is believed then that the integrated network within GM would help simplify cross border issues; VE believes it will subsequently be much easier to connect Manchester with Liverpool, Leeds and out to Sheffield offering a simplified transport system across the region.

The core issues of the Bee Network are funding and increasing ridership. There are plans to reintroduce the 1am end time of Metrolink later this year to aid the late night economy. There is confidence that the revenue will increase by marketing the network effectively. Government support will nonetheless be needed. Road congestion is being tackled by coordination of road works, among other measures. Rail stations will be co-branded. A formal vehicle is being considered for the redevelopment of central Manchester rail stations which have not kept pace with other commercial developments in the surrounding area. A segmented view is being taken to promote passenger growth. Customer complaint handling will also be integrated – with a one stop shop complaints and feedback process. A "Get on Board" campaign is being launched to promote public transport.

### Q & A with Vernon Everett

**Q:** Arthur Leathley (AL) asked what learnings can be taken from past experience in London and what improvements Manchester will gain as a result? Secondly on the financing, how does the revenue stack up against such a large area with only 3m users versus London which has 9 million over a similar area.

**A:** VE noted that the costs of integrated network aren't as high in Greater Manchester and small relative to London, with massive upside revenue opportunity given the growing population and current heavy reliance on car travel given the absence of an integrated transport network. Manchester differs from London significantly with the working from home culture whereby more people in Manchester need to travel and be in work so there is a huge commuter and leisure market. With technology (especially in London) a lot of the work is managing legacy – which is not the case in Greater Manchester where 2-3 generations of technology can be skipped over. The new buses, for example, are highly accessible for wheelchair users.

**Q:** Rob Wilson (RW) asked if the financially non sustainable improvements which are reliant on the tax payer to subsidise pose a risk if the economy suffers. Has any consideration been given to congestion charging zones similar to those in London to aid the funding?



**A:** VE confirmed that there is no public transport network anywhere that doesn't rely in some way on revenue and capital support of some description. With the existing support that is already in place egbus service operational support grant by Government, Greater Manchester is committing to covering their operating costs in due course (which is the definition of financial sustainability in London). The spread of this would be determined by a wide range of factors. There is no way congestion charging can be contemplated in Greater Manchester until there is a decent public transport service offering in place (reliable, affordable, turn up and go).

**Q:** Keith Richards (KR) Asked what the opportunities are in terms of improving accessibility? Policies of operators often provide the hurdles (eg bicycles on public Transport). How is this monitored moving forwards?

**Q:** Trisha McAuley (TM) What is the risk that people will not transfer from car to public transport but will simply move between different modes of public transport?

**A:** VE referred to a current review of policy to identify barriers which should deal with both these questions.

[routine fire alarm test]

4 Bee Network Implementation: Bus franchising and Customer Experience - Stephen Rhodes Director, Bus TfGM

Stephen Rhodes (SR) commented on a number of issues that it is hoped will make a big difference to the customer experience. He highlighted the yellow co-branding of the network, placing accountability on GMCA/TfGM, and creating opportunities. The 3 phase plan of rollout prioritises stabilisation around the current network, which will transition 'as is' so there will be no significant changes to routes or timetables on day one. Public and customer levels of input will be vastly increased via the Bee Network Customer Charter, gaining a real time voice and feedback from the customer. Looking ahead, TfGM is developing and putting in place a GM Bus Plan, which pulls together ambitions and plans for how we further develop the network and services as they move forward. Repositioning the transport sector as something to be proud of is a key part of franchising.

# 5 Bee Network: cycling and wheeling Richard Nickson Programme Director, Cycling and Walking

Richard Nickson (RN) discussed the development of the principle of universal accessibility, encompassing walking, wheeling and cycling. TfGM are unrelentingly unapologetic about the drive for a quality transport network. In terms of scale of investment, the figure is currently running at a capital programme of £250m on a network that will eventually cost at least £1.6b-£2b. The indirect cost of not delivering an active network is greater in terms of health, economy and congestion. So far £140m has been invested. He summarised the success of the Cycle Hire scheme, through which behaviour change is delivered by supporting people to gain access to the ability to walk, wheel and cycle through various programmes. Currently a Design Guide is being developed, which will go further and faster than national guidance, picking up the position on universal accessibility in terms of access for all.



Customer network satisfaction has gone up 7% since 2018, and design of network satisfaction is up 88%. Satisfaction with the condition of the network is up 18%. The Network is carrying an estimated 1m customers per week which is 9% higher per week than pre-pandemic levels. The Active network has seen a 39% weekend increase in walking wheeling and cycling. There is however, some anti-social behaviour associated with putting facilities into the public domain.

# 6 Safety on the Bee Network - Lucy Kennon Head of Resilience and Business Continuity

Lucy Kennon (LK) explained that Greater Manchester works within a well-established TravelSafe Partnership led by TfGM and GMP which brings all the operators around the table and is bult around collaboration and common strategic aims. A tactical menu of options has been developed that can be drawn upon dependant on the issue, this includes weekly specialist operations, prevention and intervention activities, deterrents and information dissemination. Transport has been established as a virtual 11th district by GM Police, which is pivotal as it recognises the significance of the network as the thread that connects all of GM together, we also benefit from a dedicated GMP transport unit. LK also discussed Operation AVRO, a police-led initiative to tackle criminality, now forming part of the annual TravelSafe calendar.

Education and behaviour change must have a proactive approach to it. Adopting 'hard' enforcement in the first instance is not always proportionate, cost effective or having the desired effect in combating anti social behaviour. So a strategic partnership has been formed with Foundation 92 – a local charity delivering youth mentoring and community engagement predominately through sport. The Home Office Safer Street Funds have provided access to pockets of funds enabling the partnership to focus on specialist subjects such as women and girls safety, missile throwing and youth ASB and look for novel ways to help prevent or deter behaviours. There is a need to undertake consistent and regular outward facing communications – to tell customers what is being done to make them feel safe, as sometimes perceptions of safety are not based on real experiences.

# 7 Metrolink: performance update - Guillaume Chanussot, Managing Director Keolis Amey Metrolink

Guillaume Chanusott (GC) discussed Metrolink performance, where patronage is increasing due to the resilience of the Metrolink service, with services running at 99% reliability. Providing a high level of passenger satisfaction led to being named Light Rail Operator of the Year, whilst also seamlessly introducing a new route with 27 new trains.

GC described the main challenges being with recruitment, training and retention along with cost inflation, anti-social behaviour and vandalism. Metrolink are working with key partners on the issue of vandalism and anti-social behaviour (which incur high costs) to keep passengers safe and feeling safe.



GC outlined Metrolink's Target vision as a Customer Centric Sustainable Partnership, delivering the fundamentals of quality of service, increased paid patronage and network integration.

GC concluded that Metrolink want to be a proactive contributor to the wider transport system, exploring opportunities of new ways of delivering a better service; if there is a strong transport offering it will create passenger demand.

8 National Highways - Bruce Parker Head of Planning and Development, Operations NW, National Highways and Peter Boulton, Head of Highways, TfGM

BP and PB talked about the Strategic Route Network (SRN) running close or through urban areas, which differs to other areas in the UK, incorporating 12 motorway and trunk roads, with a high inter-connectivity between the key and strategic route networks, highlighted by the high number of junctions joining the two.

The GM Highways Strategy Board was set up in 2015, as a recognition of the inter-urban nature of the SRN and KRN, which is 5% of the road network but carries 70% of peak traffic including most bus routes. The Board was set up between National Highways, GM Police and TfGM and meets on a quarterly basis and comprises 5 working groups. Some of the key successes were discussed which included TfGM, National Highways and GM Police control room integration, mirror messaging, major works co-ordination and traffic signals strategies.

# 9 Question and Answer Session

**Q:** NS asked the panel how the balance is maintained, both in funding and management terms, so that the eye is not take off the users needs for today as much as tomorrow?

**A:** VE recognised the challenge of simultaneously running and changing. The dynamic will change from September when traffic congestion and buses need to be considered and the greater the integration of the network going forward.

**Q:** Kate Denham (KD) asked how realistic it is to get to a place where there is a "turn up and go" service within this particular conurbation.

A: SR believed that frequency sells – and bus services have been stepped up to every 15 minutes along main corridors (as a minimum). Going forward there will be trade-offs to be made between frequency and more routes. Performance regimes keep operators incentivised to run reliable services. VE added that the key feedback gained from passenger surveys is that journey time reliability is most important, although frequency is not far behind. Through the network review, services will be reviewed as a whole going forward and strengthened where possible. GC noted that tram service provide a peak service all day.



**Q:** Cllr William Powell (WP) asked SR what are the key tools being used to increase patronage especially amongst those currently not passengers. He also asked LK are there any barriers in sharing data collected from CCTV safety cameras.

**A:** SR replied that visibility and credibility are key, in particular getting the Bee Network on everyone's radar.

LK confirmed that CCTV is extensive, as a safety feature, and is also shared with the police by operators to aid the pursuit of justice outcomes where appropriate. Data sharing is a barrier at times and one of the biggest areas to work on is around juveniles, and strengthening the data sharing agreements within working partnerships to secure the appropriate oucomes.

**Q:** Online Viewer – what is the ambition for accessibility in Manchester over the next 5 -10 years?

**A:** VE answered that the integration of the various modes gives the opportunity to look at this in a joined-up way for the first time. Money has been made available through the Access For All Programme for rail stations a number of which have been prioritised. Accessibility is a core element of the Bee Network and will continue to be so. RN added the 650km of cycling and walking routes are being reviewed for pinch points, narrowings and overcoming severance points.

**Q:** Theo de Pencier (TdP) asked if freight needs to be better integrated with necessary decisions on access, curb space and night-time deliveries.

**A:** VE confirmed there is a specific freight strategy for the region, recognising that all of the commercial centres of GM need to be serviced and this is a work in progress. RN added that GM has the second largest delivery network after London for cargo bike deliveries.

**Q:** Rob Wilson (RW) asked RN specifically what is being done to build-in cycling safety features within the transport network.

**A:** RN replied that he and PB chair the Road Danger Reduction Approach, moving towards a zero vision strategy across Greater Manchester. The principle approach is around the quality of the network, so above certain threshold only segregated schemes will be delivered. Tackling junctions is critical, as is making neighbourhoods safe at a local level. Segregation is critical in this respect.

**Q:** A representative from the Mid Cheshire Rail Users Group asked whether Sunday services would be scrapped and replaced by Saturday services.

**A:** VE recognised the challenge and explained that this is the first time that everything can be planned together, giving an opportunity to analyse markets properly and lay on the provision that the city really needs; this work is being undertaken and being looked at.

**Q:** Question from the floor: asked about the challenges around deregulation and the subsidised bus network reintroduction.

**A:** SR replied that a holistic approach is needed to analyse the data collected and how services can be put in and frequencies increased. VE added that foundations are being



laid for the future and that revenues can be increased by increasing customer use as services are gradually improved.

NS thanked the panel for their contribution and adjourned the meeting for a 10 minute break.

### Part B Rail

1 NS welcome everyone back into the room and online for the next seession, and invited Andy Mellors to kick off the session.

#### 2 Andy Mellors – Managing Director, Avanti West Coast

Andy Mellors (AM) reflected on a difficult time over the last 6-8 months and apologised for the inconvenience and frustration customers have incurred, but believes Avanti have turned a corner with the performance of services and more capacity provided. Train cancellations have been driven down since the new timetable was implemented in December 2022 although there is still more to do going forward. The performance improvement has been delivered by a forensic approach to planning and staffing. Currently, Avanti have unprecedented levels of recruitment going on; this process has also attracted 1500 applications from women into the driver grade which goes along way to improving diversity. Priorities are to build on these improvements, but challenges remain around a number of factors, including residual staff availability matters, which is being proactively managed working with colleagues and Unions. Growing the rail industry and delivering a better railway is important, in terms of the quality of the product and trains that are provided.

The Pendolino train refurbishment programme is at the half way mark (£117m investment in the fleet) gaining good feedback from customers. The first batch of Hitachi trains are also expected imminently to replace older stock (£350m worth of investment) which includes the North Wales diesel train route. Station improvements are also being undertaken at Manchester Piccadilly, Wigan, Liverpool Lime Street and Liverpool stations.

AM wanted to address a key point made by customers, that of advance ticket availability, and was pleased to announce that weekday tickets are now available 12 weeks in advance with weekend tickets available 8 weeks in advance, in line with industry standards. The train planning team has been provided with additional resource to recover the position following industrial action and engineering work. The new Super fare product has received attention in the media, and is popular with customers, as it allows flexible travel according to capacity on the day of travel.

#### 3 Nick Donovan – Managing Director, Northern

Nick Donovan (ND) introduced the Customer Insight Programme, which includes a post travel survey running since 2021 receiving typically 8000 responses per month, providing detailed insight, and a Northerneers Panel with 1000 members, enabling the opportunity to



build specific focus groups. Northern now have data available for the first time enabling net promoter scores (0-10 recommendation scores) to be viewed by line routes and at a granular level. An accessibility panel is also used to promote initiatives such as the Autism Friendly Scheme. QR codes are also being trialled around the North East for instant feedback.

ND highlighted 3 priorities for Northern; train service performance, value for money and business/crowding of services.

On current performance, ND conceded that improvement is needed, with a figure of 3.8% on cancellations in period 11, increasing slightly in Period 12 due to severe weather. So although there is more to do, this shows a reasonably solid performance.

There has been an enormous focus on resource planning managing, over the last 2-3 years, to increase drivers competency levels around route knowledge and knowledge of the 13 different traction types. There are currently just under 1800 drivers against a resource need of 1600 to run the network, with about 160 drivers in basic training at any one time, making Northern the largest operator in terms of a throughput of drivers into the industry.

The challenges being faced within resourcing include sickness and absence, which is hurting the business, and proving both difficult to manage and costly. Given the workforce terms and conditions, 95% of train crews have Sunday as a voluntary day in the working week which, if operating a 7 day railway, is not sustainable in the longer term and needs to be addressed.

Looking forward, ND wanted to acknowledge the strength and depth of the 7, 000 strong team at Northern, attracting great skills sets from other sectors into the business.

New trains are in service and running successfully. Back-office facilities have had investment, and the engineering area of the business is a key focus in terms of modernising systems and training, to increase the availability and reliability of the fleet.

Importantly, there is an efficiency programme; every route at Northern is subsidised, and focus is given to where that money goes. Out of date back-office systems are being reviewed to streamline efficiency going forward.

#### 4 Matthew Golton – Managing Director, TransPennine Express (TPE)

Matthew Golton (MG) introduced himself and apologised to customers for recent service delivery not being good enough. Prior to Autumn 2021 TPE was delivering its best service in a decade with the accolade of Train Operator of the Year. In late January a focused recovery plan was offered to the Government, since which, on-the-day cancellations have been reduced by over a third, and pre-planned cancellations have been reduced by 13% - a 20% improvement overall in cancellations.

MG recorded his thanks to colleagues at Network Rail, as well as train operator colleagues, who have given critical support, including ticket acceptance.



The TransPennine route upgrade is in the middle of very major works, seeing a doubling of planned disruption this year to passenger journeys, and MG reiterated that it is important that customers are looked after during this period.

Much focus in the past year has been around providing customers with confidence to come back to the railway post COVID, including offering a 'My Station View' facility to ease navigational anxiety. The use of body cameras has been extended amongst colleagues to support them in handling and preventing more challenging discussions. Underpinning everything is continuous investment in staff, training and their working environment.

David Sidebottom concluded. It was, he said, good to hear some acknowledgement of what has been a tough time for passengers. He noted that it is research-proven that reliability drives passenger numbers, and poor information drives dissatisfaction. Working in partnership with Transport Focus can help build trust and confidence, grow the railway and encourage the levelling up agenda across the North.

#### 5 Question and Answer Session

**Q:** TM asked about Avanti on-board service; what plans are there in place to ensure levels of on board service return to normal?

**A:** AM explained that the immediate, priority, focus has been on restoring punctuality and reliability over the last 6 months at Avanti. It is apparent there is more work to be done in terms of fitness for purpose of the on-board offer, with a plan in place to deliver improvements. There is a specification and this must be delivered against.

ND added that Northern prides itself on the visibility of front line train crew. Train presentation scores are near record highs. On-train contact levels are 3 times higher than pre-pandemic.

**Q:** Question from the floor: what can customers expect over the next 6 months in terms of improvements to changes and cancellations and how these are communicated to the customer?

**A:** AM stressed the importance of building on the improvements made recently. Despite some headwind over the summer, with annual leave and new train training to be undertaken, there is a determination to maximise the drivers that are available to operate services, along with the recruitment of unprecedented numbers of new train drivers, incluyding to address almost a third of drivers approaching retirement age. This will result in the consolidation of recent improvements whilst moving forward. ND was unapologetic in highlighting some big wins within Northern in terms of delivery, including, 3,000 additional services per week added into the December 2022 timetable; interim results suggest this timetable is more reliable. It is important to celebrate the positive feedback that customers are providing for Northern which is now in revenue growth, despite slightly softer volumes. MG added they have more train crew in TPE currently than ever previously. He confirmed that TPE timetable will not be changing in May, but will change in December when there is greater confidence in sustainable reliability.

Q: Online question: are the recovery plans public documents?



**A:** MG confirmed that as far as TPE was concerned, the plans currently exist between the operator and the DfT, but a précis will be included in the end of year report to stakeholders, expected in the next week or two.

**Q**: KD asked about what is being done to regain lost passengers, how they are being engaged and how success is being measured in this respect.

**A:** MG explained that there are two types of passengers, those that are still with rail, and those that need encouraging to return. TPE have frozen their advanced fares this year as a conscious decision to that end and are talking to Transport Focus about how best to encourage lost passengers back.

A marketing campaign will be necessary when a certain level of reliability has been reached. It is thought the leisure market has the potential to be bigger than it was prepandemic, whilst the business and commuting market has come back more strongly.

AM feels they are further along that journey of customer confidence and consistent delivery of the timetable. Avanti are also talking to DfT about future marketing plans, overlayed on national marketing campaigns.

**Q:** A representative from the Community Rail Network asked how could investing in community rail partnerships and supporting station groups/volunteers help passengers?

A: MG was pleased to be involved in the past year in getting TPE's new Newcastle – Edinburgh services going – joining up communities on the route including a new station at Reston. This joining up of the dots responded to a call from ocal community campaigners. The growth in new rail journeys is a testament to the people who did not give up and felt the railway needs to serve us differently. Community rail partnerships provide insight that is needed and give ministers and MP's a reason to say yes. AM added that he was at Runcorn station where the repurposed 1st class lounge is now a popular community space. Although Avanti are playing their part there is always more that can be done.

**Q:** Question from the floor: how accurate are the cancellation and delay statistics, in reflecting the delivery of a service to as many people as possible? For example, starting short of origin, terminating short of destination, diversion and skipping stops to make up time. How are these reflected in the statistics?

**A:** Anthony Smith answered that it is crucial that people can trust the data that is in the public domain. The industry is on a journey to get accurate data that reflects the passenger experience, rather than measuring the metal. MG added that the DfT and Regulator see everything and have all the figures and it is important for them to do so. The absolute motivating factor is around advance notice to the customer.

NS thanked all guest speakers, and hoped their comments provided some hope, despite the long and tough road for all those involved; there is still a long way to go. Passengers also need to know there is hope and that the industry, with Transport Focus helping whenever and wherever it can, is doing everything possible to deliver improvements, and the quicker the better.



# Part C Corporate affairs

1 Board meeting minutes: November 2022, Cardiff The Board approved these minutes.

# 2 Committee meeting minutes:

- 2.1 <u>Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (January 2023)</u> The minutes were **noted**. KD also noted that the Transport Focus conduct policy was reviewed; it is always useful to have a reminder of the Nolan Principles and for them to be front of mind for all Board Members and senior staff.
- 2.2 <u>Statistics Governance Group (December 2022)</u> The minutes were **noted**.

### 3 <u>Reports from subsidiaries:</u>

- 3.1 Transport Focus Wales (January and March 2023) The minutes were **noted**.
- 3.2 Transport Focus Scotland (February 2023) The minutes were **noted**.

# 4 For noting by the Board

Items previously discussed and approved out of meeting or in private session were **approved**:

- 4.1 BRD2223-015 (Lorry drivers facilities roll-out)
- 4.2 BRD2223-016 (GBRT Customer community
- 4.3 BRD2223-017 (Isles of Scilly transport research)
- 4.4 BRD2223-018 (Your Bus Journey 2022-23)
- 4.5 BRD2223-019 (Your Bus Journey 2023-24)

### 5 <u>Items for approval</u>

5.1 Indicative budget 2023-24

The Board **approved** the indicative budget for 2023-24, as presented by NH. He confirmed that the funding available is £6.6m (as 2022-23) so an effective real-time inflation based cut, but in this respect Transport Focus was in a very similar position to other bodies. The detailed workplan was in development and would be the subject of discussion at the April Board meeting.

### 6 Any other (public) business

There being no further business, public or otherwise, NS thanked everyone for attending, and expressed his gratitude to all the speakers and the planning team for a very useful event.



Signed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Nigel Stevens, Chair

Date