

LCR TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the LCR Transport Committee held in the Authority Chamber - No.1 Mann Island, Liverpool, L3 1BP on Thursday, 10th March, 2022 the following Members were

P r e s e n t:

Councillor Liam Robinson
Chair of the Transport Committee
(in the Chair)

Councillors J Burke, C Cooke, J Donnelly, S Foulkes, G Friel, S Halsall, P Hayes, N Killen, A Lavelle (from 2.23pm), K McGlashan, N Nicholas, D O'Connor, J Pearson, G Philbin, T Rowe, G Stockton, A Wall and J Williams.

Attending remotely: Councillors J Banks, A Jones and T Brough.

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He advised the meeting about the usual housekeeping arrangements and made a number of announcements.

Remote attendance

Councillors Jeanette Banks, Allan Jones, and Tony Brough were participating in the meeting remotely. The Chair highlighted that Councillors who were taking part in the meeting remotely were doing so due to health reasons. Unfortunately, the Government had not changed the legislation and therefore, although they would be able to contribute to the discussions taking place in the meeting, they would not be able to vote.

56. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor John Stockton.

57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

58. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

59. OPERATOR PRESENTATION - NORTHERN RAIL UPDATE

Chris Jackson, Regional Director for Northern Trains gave a presentation to the Committee. He confirmed that his remit included looking after train drivers, conductors, station colleagues and also the stakeholder relationship. It was a team of around 2,500 people.

He explained that Northern Trains Limited had come into existence on 1 March 2020. The previous franchise was Arriva Rail North and that had been

removed by the Secretary of State. The ownership model was quite unusual as Northern Rail was 100% owned by Directly Operated Holdings Limited (DOHL) who were in turn 100% owned by the Department for Transport and therefore essentially Northern Trains were government controlled. He noted that there were two other train operating companies with a similar ownership model - London North-Eastern Railway and also South-Eastern. Northern Trains were widely regarded as being the most complicated train operator in the country. It was a big employer in the North with really well paid and stable jobs. There were over 7,000 people in the business and of course in the City Region Northern Trains were big employers as well. For example, there was a big train crew depot for drivers and conductors at Liverpool, Liverpool Lime Street station and outstations and the flagship maintenance depot at Allerton which maintained the electric fleet as well. He stressed the fact that only 30% of the Northern network was electrified.

Chris Jackson presented a graph which showed the number of drivers that had been off with Covid from the start of the pandemic until last week. It showed an extremely fluctuating picture, but the graph did not demonstrate that Northern Trains were still experiencing, both directly and indirectly, the impact of Covid on operations and in particular at the Liverpool Depot which was seeing higher than the national average and the company average in terms of absence. Significant numbers of long Covid cases and people waiting some considerable amount of time for operations were being seen and consequently that was having an impact on staff availability and the level of service which could be offered. In more recent weeks the national shortage of occupational health practitioners was also having an impact on colleagues returning to work.

The next slide set out the level of service that had been operating at different phases throughout the pandemic. The industry was used to two timetable changes per year, one in May and the other in December. But there had been a phenomenal amount of change over the last couple of years and he was proud of the relationships that had been built with union colleagues throughout that period which had allowed us to be that flexible. He confirmed that the timetable that was operating today would continue until May 2022. The timetable from May to December 2022 was currently being finalised and he would communicate that in due course.

The customer demand recovery was still way below pre-pandemic passenger journeys. Currently within Northern over the last couple of days around 74%, or three quarters, of the pre-pandemic journeys had taken place and that had created a big revenue black hole for Northern Trains and for the industry as a whole. Big shifts were also being seen in how passengers travelled and that was reflective of how society had changed. For example, the traditional really busy periods in the am and pm peak period were not being seen. Instead the busiest days now seemed to be on a Wednesday, which showed people were adapting to two or three days in the office, but also on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. That was creating a big challenge for the industry because all of the engineering works had traditionally taken place over the weekend and bank holidays weekends but that was the new time when people wanted to travel most and therefore it would be necessary to adapt to that and move forward in that regard.

He stated that Northern Trains were working really hard to win customers back with campaigns such as Sell a Million Seats at £1 for adults and 50p for children which had been well received, cheaper advanced purchase fares that were being offered particularly in and out of Liverpool to stimulate growth. Northern Trains had been working hard in the background around flexible tickets and also readying itself for smart tickets which was the way of the future. An extra £10m had been invested

in cleaning as customers had wanted reassurance that trains were clean. Northern Trains had also partnered with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus to offer discounted or free travel for those who were attending job interviews.

During the period of the pandemic a lot of work had been going on and Chris Jackson confirmed that all of the old 'Pacer' trains had been retired. All of the 101 brand new trains were in operation and he was pleased to see that Liverpool had received its fair share of that new traction. Also all of the legacy trains, trains that had been in operation for a number of years, had all been fully refurbished which included a universal toilet to assist with accessibility and improved customer information systems. Northern Trains was also 52% complete in its Digital Trains Programme to ensure that the legacy fleet was equipped with wi-fi and power sockets. Eight new bi-mode trains had also been introduced which ran half on diesel and half on electric and was currently operating between Southport and Manchester Stalybridge and Alderley Edge. All of the bi-mode trains were maintained at Allerton.

Further customer improvements had been put in place. £2.5m had been invested in improving stations. A lot of work had also taken place in respect of the car parking offer and to make the stations more accessible, such as the introduction of a scooter permit scheme. There were now 157 Amazon lockers at Northern stations and upgraded CCTV had been installed at many stations.

In respect of partnership working he was particularly proud of the partnership with Merseytravel and felt that they had a good working relationship, but it was also challenging for the right reasons. A lot of projects had been delivered or were due to be delivered such as:

- Prescott Station – new lifts, refurbished ticket office, new toilet facilities, enhanced lighting and signage, drop off area
- Joint bids to DfT's Access for All Fund for April deadline – Earlestown, Hough Green, Edge Hill and Meols Cop
- Upgrades to train interiors – moquette seat covers
- Defibrillators approved for installation at St. Helens Central, Earlestown, Newton-le-Willows, Hough Green, St Helens Junction, Garswood, Prescott, Rainhill, Eccleston Park, Roby, Huyton, Edge Hill
- Station painting at Meols Cop and waiting room improvements at Garswood
- Station 2D maps on Google Earth to help with accessibility
- Body worn cameras for staff
- Pigeon mitigation plans for Wavertree
- Close working with community groups for station adoption
- Partnership on Lea Green and Headbolt Lane developments

Chris Jackson highlighted some of the industry challenges and opportunities. The industry was facing unprecedented financial challenges. £16bn of additional funding from the Treasury had gone into the industry since the start of the pandemic but that would not be sustainable, and the industry would need to embark on some level of reform. The pandemic had shifted digitalisation significantly, 59% of all ticket purchases were now on mobile or digital. Less than 1 in 4 interactions happened at the ticket office so there had been a fundamental shift in how people were buying tickets. There was an opportunity here because ticketing was vastly complicated and there was a strong desire to achieve smart ticketing which would be included in the Business Plan. There was also a great opportunity as an industry and operator to sell the green credentials of travel, but it would be a challenge to do that as a large number of diesel trains in operation were 30-37 years old. At the back end of this

decade it would be necessary to make some big decisions around the fleet and rolling stock. As had been mentioned previously only 30% of network was electrified a decision would need to be made about electrification and alternative technologies like battery and others in order to hit the net zero target. He thought that diversity was a strong focus Northern Trains and also for Great British Railways and it would be necessary to ensure that people working in Northern Trains were more reflective of the communities it served. Northern Trains had started to make some great strides in that regard but there was more to do.

Chris Jackson also referred to the community rail network and he asked for support from the Committee on this issue. Community rail was a key part of the modern railway as it delivered so much for customers and community groups who volunteered but Merseyside had always had a low take up of community volunteers and whilst there were excellent examples of community links there was a great opportunity to do more as station adoption levels in Merseyside were much lower than anywhere else on the network. Northern Trains invested over £1m a year in community rail and it was a great opportunity to get involved in order to improve local stations.

In respect of the December 2022 timetable he stated that the May 2018 timetable change had been a disaster for the industry and for the North-West in particular, but the industry had learnt from it and had come together with a proposal for December 2022 which was now publicly available for consultation on the website. He confirmed that he would be happy to come back to a future meeting to discuss what the 2022 timetable would look like in its final version. This was a golden opportunity to deliver a timetable that had good capacity, was reliable and resilient. He summarised that the industry did have a number of challenges and it needed to win customers back. There was a massive cost challenge but there were a lot of things ongoing that would deliver improvements for the customer, and he was excited about what the future would bring and the partnership working with the City Region in achieving that.

Councillor Ken McGlashan referred to the integration of buses, trains, timetables and ticketing. He asked whether Northern Trains could commit to bring that into fruition as he felt that integration needed to work seamlessly for everybody?

Chris Jackson responded that in terms of integrated transport, ticketing and timetables there was a commitment to work with the Combined Authority on that. One of the graphs in the presentation had set out just how much the timetable had changed and that made it difficult to plan for integration as the railway was much more complicated to plan around than it was from a bus perspective. He did however see a period of stability coming forward which would enable planning in a much more integrated fashion from a timetable point of view particularly from May and December 2022. There was a team in Northern Trains who looked specifically at accessibility and integration, and he would make sure that they worked with the Combined Authority on that issue. Northern Trains were big advocates of smart ticketing as that was what customers wanted as they did not want to keep chopping and changing tickets between modes. The Business Plan which was currently awaiting sign off included strong plans around smart and integrated ticketing and how that could come to fruition. Northern Trains had got a firm seat at the table with the various ticketing steering groups that Liverpool City Region Combined Authority sat upon and therefore he was confident that the right people were talking but he would be happy to take on board any further ideas offline.

Councillor Gordon Friel asked what plans were in place to protect revenue? He had concerns about the Government's Integrated Rail Plan and he asked what views Chris Jackson had around that and whether he had concerns in economic terms as to how he would operate in the future in respect of inflation prices for fuel and wages.

Chris Jackson responded that the ticketless travel rate was 8% last year and this year it was 6%. There was a small minority of people who did not want to pay for a ticket, but he was proud that the approach to ticketing and penalty fares was applied fairly and that had been judged in various correspondences that had taken place. Northern Trains did take it very seriously and there had been a campaign called "Buy before you Board" where the consequences of not having a valid ticket were publicised. More people had actually been prosecuted this year than in the corresponding period last year. Councillor Friel had mentioned the Integrated Rail Plan and Chris Jackson's personal view was that he had been a little bit disappointed that there had not been anything more significant on the rolling programme of electrification. There was so much more scope for electrification and the pathway to net zero but alternative fuels and alternative means of propulsion could be investigated. He had been surprised at how negatively the IRP had been received in the North and he felt that the North had benefited in terms of the high speed line from Warrington through to Marsden together with the trans-Pennine re-signalling and electrification which would have some significant benefits for Liverpool City Region. In terms of inflation and economic concerns ticket prices had gone up 3.8% recently. Northern Trains had actually frozen some of the ticket prices and the advanced purchase fares or Northern only fares would not be increased until June this year as it was felt to be the right thing to do. He stated that inflationary pressures would be felt across the whole of the sector and there was uncertainty around what would happen next year. He reiterated the fact that the industry was facing an unprecedented financial challenge and that was something that everyone was going to have to consider.

Councillor Jerry Williams noted that the pandemic had been awful on so many levels and he put on record his thanks to Chris Jackson and his team for providing the services for essential journeys to be made by key workers. As we were now beginning to emerge from the pandemic he asked what plans were proposed to put back all the services that were in place previously but due to resource issues had been curtailed over the last few years.

Chris Jackson thanked Councillor Williams for recognising the work that the teams had done. He was also very proud of the teams as they had been in consistently through the pandemic and had worked really hard to get key workers from A to B and equally he was really proud of how the timetables had been adjusted to meet the needs of key workers across the North. In terms of the question about when things would be put back he queried what "put back" actually meant. The market had fundamentally changed. Traditionally the railway had been built around the am and pm peak but now the railway was much busier on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday and it was therefore necessary to make sure the railway industry was geared up to deliver what would be a new normal. One of the things set against the wider financial challenge was running around empty trains using an old timetable format as that did not make financial sense. Therefore, the timetables and service patterns of the future would need to be reflective of the changes in the market.

Councillor Nina Killen asked about fully staffed stations as this was something that the Authority felt was important to help people with their tickets and information but also to help them feel safe on the network. She asked how Northern Trains would

be working with the Combined Authority to maintain those fully staffed stations in the City Region. She also noted that there were quite a lot of gender neutral facilities across our network which was fine. However, in larger stations a lot of communal areas could be seen with a row of cubicles and communal sinks. Many women said how important those spaces were to them as it made them feel safer to be in a women-only space and it provided privacy particularly when there might not be a lot of other people around. Sometimes women would self-exclude from public spaces if those facilities were not there so there was some concern that they might be disappearing and being replaced with gender neutral facilities. She asked if Chris Jackson could clarify whether Northern had a policy around that.

Chris Jackson said that the vital role that colleagues played at stations was recognised but more importantly to look at what role they would play in the future. Ticket offices were only interacting with less than one in four journeys now and therefore he felt that there was an opportunity to do things differently. It was necessary to move with the times so a ticket office which sold six tickets per shift would not be sensible. There were some other options that could potentially be done in a space like that and that was why Northern Trains looked forward to working with the Combined Authority as to what the retail model would look like in the future and more importantly how the customer experience could be improved. In respect of the latter point around gender neutral and female only spaces he was not sure whether there was a Northern policy on that but he would take that question away and provide feedback to Councillor Killen. He referred to Lea Green which was a joint specification and therefore there were opportunities to influence layouts at locations such as that.

Councillor Sean Halsall stated that Southport was a very important part of the region and he asked if Chris Jackson could provide an update on the plans to try and retain some of the services into Oxford Road. He also asked whether he would be prepared to work together on longer term initiatives such as reducing the journey time between Southport and Manchester to under an hour. Also how had he worked with the TSSA, RMT and ASLEF throughout the pandemic, what lessons had been learnt and how were you going to ensure that those trade union voices would be heard going forward in the future.

Chris Jackson responded that he was proud from a Southport perspective as throughout the pandemic two trains per hour had been retained. He recognised that there had been some contention about South Manchester connectivity from Southport from December 2022 and Northern Trains were actively engaged with some of the local user groups in relation to that. However, it was necessary to manage expectations in terms of going beyond Oxford Road for the Southport services in December 2022 as it was just not feasible and it would go against all the principles of what we had been trying to do to fix the congestion problems on the Castlefield corridor. Therefore, from December 2022 the Southport service to South Manchester would terminate at Manchester Oxford Road. It would still be possible to get another service that would go through Manchester Victoria down towards Stalybridge. Considerable feedback had been received from stakeholders on that point and that was something that would need to be looked at when considering what to do with Castlefield and whether there was any future infrastructure investment on that corridor. In respect of working with the trade unions he felt that Northern Trains had very strong working relationships with those trade unions. There might not always be agreement on everything but that was what made a healthy working environment and he was really proud of just how much change had been delivered in a short space of time which had required everyone to come to the table. There had been no issues as everyone had collectively realised that it was the right thing to do

in order to get key workers from A to B. The relationships were strong and there would always be contentions, but he was really proud of how those relationships had worked in the past and how they would continue going forward.

Councillor Ged Philbin noted that it had been mentioned about the low uptake of community groups getting involved. He referred to the redundant stations along the LTR and asked whether there were any plans for either commercial or community group use of those stations.

Chris Jackson agreed that there were some great buildings and he believed that Earlestown was one of the oldest waiting rooms in the world. There had been some initial interest pre-pandemic. Northern Trains wanted people to take over those redundant station buildings and offered incentives like favourable rates. It was also possible to bid for heritage grants to refurbish locations such as that. He stated that if anyone had any ideas or knew anyone who might be interested then please feel free to get in touch.

Councillor Tommy Rowe stated that this was the first year that Northern Trains had put on a Boxing Day service to complement the Merseyrail services on Boxing Day in the region. He asked if Chris Jackson could provide an update on how that went and the plans for the future for any further Boxing Day arrangements.

Chris Jackson replied that the service in question had been the St. Helens Central - all stations essentially to Liverpool Lime Street - and it had been the only service within Northern that had operated on that day. He was aware that it had been a strong aspiration of Councillor Robinson and others for that to happen and he was proud to say that it had been delivered with 100% performance on the day. He had some figures available, but he cautioned that this was purely railway costs and did not take into consideration the wider societal benefits which would need to be factored in should we look at doing that again in the future. So in essence we had got £3k in revenue but it cost £43k to operate on the day. We need to understand the future socio-economic benefits soon as we would have to make a decision soon as to whether to operate on Boxing Day this year. He also recognised the fact that the football was not on that day which would have suppressed some of the patronage.

Councillor Nathalie Nicholas noted that it had been mentioned that Northern Trains was a stable employer with 7,000 staff and she asked if there was a figure in terms of the gender balance, equality balance and the diverse population. It was mentioned that Northern Trains had been making strides to improve the diversity and she asked what those strides had been. She also referred to younger people as they were the future generation and if we got them to commute by train that would be great. That was a priority and she asked if there were any plans to give young people reduced tickets so that more young people would be encouraged to use the trains.

Chris Jackson said that Northern Trains were under-represented from a gender and diversity point of view but were working tirelessly and strongly with investors in diversity to get the appropriate accreditation and there was a dedicated person in the team who was working hard on making the jobs seem more attractive to people who would not normally work on the railway. He said that targets were quite rightly very stringent and he would be more than happy to provide more detail offline. In respect of the question around young people and affordability and he had mentioned that fares had increased by 3.8%. The average fare was hovering around the £3.60 mark which was in the lower quartile when compared with other operators. We were doing a lot to incentivise people such as duo tickets and also some great value fares.

Councillor Jeanette Banks asked if there were any plans to recognise the history of our network.

Chris Jackson agreed that there was so much history in this part of the world and he recalled a session Councillor Robinson and he had attended around railway heritage and how to bring that more to the fore in the city region. His understanding was that a plaque was ready for Earlestown to recognise the history of that location with the local community group and he would be more than happy to share details of that with Councillor Banks particularly if that was in her constituency. Chris Jackson thought that she was right and recognised that there was more to do in that space advising that Northern invested heavily in community rail and had close connections with railway heritage organisations. If there was anything that she felt was particularly missing, he encouraged Councillor Banks to get in touch.

Councillor Chris Cooke said that there had been talk about making stations more attractive and getting community groups to enhance the appearance. He felt that there could be better signposting and perhaps Council's should be reminded about ensuring that there was adequate signposting.

Chris Jackson stated that all publicity was good publicity and in terms of wayfinding he would link that back to one of the slides and the Great British Railway logo. People would be able to associate with it and it would be the logo used going forward. It also came back to the integrated transport question whereby there was a collective responsibility to signpost people towards public transport in general.

Councillor Liam Robinson thanked Chris Jackson for the presentation and some of the useful and positive things arising from it. For example, all the hard work which had taken place during the pandemic in improving the wi-fi system. It was also good to hear that additional investment was being put into cleaning. He felt that coming out of the pandemic it was important that people understood that public transport was a clean, healthy and safe place to be because some of the public messaging throughout the pandemic had pushed people into cars and it was necessary to reverse that.

The Chair also stated that the offer to work with the Combined Authority and other Councils and Community Rail Partnerships was something he would be keen to take up going forward. Also the offer to work with the City Region around diversity was something that we would also like to take up and pursue. The City Region was very proud of its diversity, and it wanted to ensure that all of its communities could succeed in careers like the railway. As had been mentioned railway jobs were skilled, stable and well paid and those jobs should be available for everyone in the community.

Finally, the Chair, thanked Chris Jackson for the Boxing Day service which had been provided and he would like to continue to work with Northern Trains on that. Equally he understood how travel patterns had changed because of the pandemic and that it had provided lots of opportunities but at the same time he would not like to lose some of the connections we had had previously. He would therefore like to keep working closely with Northern Trains on making sure that the right resource was used to facilitate further connectivity.

In respect of Railway Industry funding some of the strongest recovery in railway patronage was in the North and indeed in this City Region. It was therefore concerning when the Treasury suggested the railway industry needed to cut its

funding across the board and he felt that this should not be happening across the North of England. Additional funding would be required to build back out of the pandemic economically but just as importantly it was also needed to address the climate emergency. Therefore, it would be necessary to focus on supporting the existing railway system whilst at the same time expanding. The Combined Authority would certainly be on the front foot in fighting any proposed cuts in funding from the government.

The Committee showed their appreciation for the presentation from Chris Jackson of Northern Trains.

60. DEVELOPING THE NEXT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN FOR THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION - UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

Huw Jenkins, Lead Officer – Transport Policy, presented a report which provided a follow-up to Members on the development of the fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP). This would provide a strategic transport framework to extend to 2040. The report updated Members on the work to date in developing the “Vision and Goals”, discussed and endorsed by Members at their meeting of November 2021, and on the next steps.

The main aim of the report was to update the first report brought to this Committee in November 2021 with a draft vision and goals to drive the next LTP. It would replace the two existing plans for the City Region. Back in November he had reported on how we would be starting with a quite structured process, looking at what transport needed to do, what the policy context required us to do, what wider City Region policies required us to do and from that would develop transport policies, a transport strategy, a funding programme and actual schemes would fall out of that process. The starting point was therefore to gain an understanding of what transport needed to do to support the City Region.

The draft vision contained five draft goals and they had been pretty well received following informal endorsement by the Committee last November and discussions had been taking place with a range of bodies around those goals and there had been broad acceptance that they were meaningful and delivered the right sort of priorities across the board. There had been a number of changes made to the draft document and to the goals themselves and they had been summarised in paragraph 3.2 of the report. It showed how the draft vision had evolved since November. For example, the document in Appendix 1 now reflected the Integrated Rail Plan and the Decarbonisation Strategy. The City Region had adopted its own Net Zero Carbon Plan very recently and the role of transport in decarbonising was critical throughout this. In respect of transport trains were responsible for some 34% of carbon emissions as a City Region, whereas private cars typically provided around 67% of carbon emissions so there was clearly a lot of work to be done.

He felt that there was now a finalised set of visions and goals which had been set out in section 3.5 of the report which effectively set forward the vision for the delivery of a clean, safe, resilient and acceptable London style transport system that supported our various needs as a City Region and then five supporting goals as follows:

- GOAL 1 - Ensure that transport supports recovery, sustainable growth and development, and that our Transport Plan, Plan for Prosperity, Climate Action Plan and Spatial Development Strategy are fully aligned

- GOAL 2 - Achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 or sooner whilst safeguarding and enhancing our environment
- GOAL 3 - Improving the health and quality of life of our people and communities through the right transport solutions, including safer, more attractive streets and places used by zero emission transport
- GOAL 4 - Ensuring that our transport network and assets are resilient, responsive to the effects of climate change, and are well maintained
- GOAL 5 - Ensuring that we respond to uncertainty and change but also innovation and new technologies

The draft vision document was very much the starting point in setting out the future of transport. The diagram in section 4.1 showed the direction of travel required, advising that we were currently at Stage 1 in respect of understanding the challenges and developing the vision for transport. The next stage would be to go into some structured consultation with stakeholders and groups and he stressed the fact that it was not proposed to go back to ask some of the questions which had previously been asked. He stated that there was already a strong evidence base across the City Region based on people's views following the Vision for Bus and the consultation around the Walking and Cycling Plans and therefore there were some clear views as to what people wanted. It was known that people wanted safe, segregated cycle routes and people were concerned about the cost of travel, cleanliness and poor punctuality. Having already got a clear understanding of what people wanted it would then be necessary to get under the skin of what a 'London style' network might look like. It would be necessary to understand people's concerns and very often the perceptions which could be damaging when delivering this vision for transport and decarbonisation.

Stage 2 would be to understand what the future might mean in transport terms e.g. some of the more technical work to understand what economic growth and different ways of working meant for transport. For example, how far did the vision for transport take us on that decarbonisation journey and how close to net zero 2040 would it get us. It would be necessary to test some of that in detail in order that a preferred transport strategy could be developed which he was hoping to bring back in the Autumn and which would then form a fundamental building block in the transport plan. The aim was to seek adoption of the plan in Spring 2023 and also to undertake an integrated assessment of the plan looking at the equality implications, environmental implications and social value implications.

He reiterated that the document was a starting point in the plan and was not the full strategy and therefore there were aspects that still needed to be updated and there were events beyond our control which would always have an impact. But in conclusion the next stage would be to go out to consultation to start to develop the options around different scenarios and what that meant in transport terms following which he would bring a report back to the Committee around the preferred strategy.

Councillor Gordon Friel felt that this was a very good draft document to start off with. He referred to page 39 of the agenda which mentioned putting rail freight on the front foot. He had concerns that with the current lack of investment in rail freight he could not see any further investment coming forward. It was therefore going to be really difficult to move forward within the next 50 years in respect of rail freight especially given the constraints of gauge clearance etc and he hoped that further reports would be brought back to the Committee on progress with rail freight.

The presentation from Chris Jackson had been very good particularly around the uncertainties of costs relating to transport and he felt that it was a bit optimistic in relation to the advantages and opportunities. He questioned was the opportunity in the changing patterns with our local transport plan and that we were trying to plan against an unprecedented backdrop of financial unknowns such as what the cost of fuel would be next year, what the rate of inflation would be next year. It could be said that this would drive people away from utilising public transport but equally the high cost and inability to purchase motor vehicles might well drive them onto public transport. There was a great deal of uncertainty around all that and that was why this was a really good document.

Huw Jenkins responded that he was glad that the freight angle had come out as this was an important and significant part of transport and was an important part of the City Region's role. It was integral to the Freeport, but he was also aware that freight adversely affected people's quality of life as it emitted harmful pollution and it was a major cause of carbon. It would therefore be necessary to collectively decarbonise freight just as it was necessary to decarbonise transport. The challenge around that should not be under-estimated as there was an important role for rail in taking more freight, but it would not be the only answer.

There were problems with capacity on the rail network and it was an even greater problem for freight than it was for passenger rail, but it would be necessary to look at new solutions and hopefully this was what would be coming through the next stages of the transport plan. There was a need to start testing the role of hydrogen, the future in terms of electric cabs, electric tractor units, consolidation centres, and other ways of moving last mile freight. This was a particular issue with the number of white vans on the network with all of the online deliveries which had been a consequence of the pandemic. There was scope for consolidating some of those movements onto bikes for example. He summarised that there were a lot of uncertainties but there was an urgency around decarbonising from a freight point of view as well as across the whole transport sector. That would form part of the testing of the strategy.

Councillor Nathalie Nicholas commented that this was a really good draft document and she felt that the five goals were ambitious. Goal 3 was really important because in terms of health, wellbeing and quality of life if we did not have a healthy population they would not be on the network or be able to use the trains. This was a really important aspect and she was pleased to see that it had been included in the document. It was about changing people's behaviour and she looked forward to this coming back to Committee.

Councillor Nina Killen said that it was good to see that accessibility was a theme throughout the document. Disabled people faced bigger barriers than any group when it came to transport and they were often the most challenged financially due to difficulties in accessing well paid work as a result of challenges in getting around. She referred to Motability's recent report 'Understanding the transport accessibility gap' which stated that even before Covid, one in three disabled people said they just did not make some journeys due to problems with transport and one in five disabled people were unable to travel due to the lack of appropriate transport options. 40% of disabled people often experienced issues or difficulties when travelling by train in the UK and disabled people reported two to three times more difficulties than non-disabled people when travelling. She therefore was glad to see this had been included as a theme as it should continue to be at the forefront of what the authority did. It would also be important to hear the voices of disabled people through engaging with disabled people as part of the consultation process.

Huw Jenkins agreed with the comments made. It was a question which had been raised a number of times as part of the informal consultation. If the transport network was not accessible and usable by all the goals would not be delivered and neither would a network that supported economic growth. The network had to be attractive to people from 8-80 years of age and for every user. The points around health had also been very well made. Poor health was a factor which led to worklessness across the City Region and was a big factor as to why people who could work did not work due to poor health. There were so many compelling reasons in transport in economic and social terms as to why it was important to improve health and prevent people getting ill through transport emissions and transport consequences.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson agreed that this was a really good piece of work and was part of the journey before the final Local Transport Plan was ratified early in the new year. From his perspective the most important thing was how the public would be involved in this process. This organisation was full of brilliant ideas but actually it was important to ensure that all of the travelling public were included in the process to get their thoughts, perspectives and views and ideas of things we should or should not be doing over the next 15 years and beyond.

Huw Jenkins stated that there was a draft brief that he would be happy to share separately that set out the process to be followed. It was recognised that it would be necessary to reach out and engage with different groups who had experienced different challenges over the years, for example, care leavers, younger people, people who drove and people who did not drive. Colleagues in the Research Team were currently pulling this together at the moment which would involve structured interviews, telephone interviews, face to face interviews, focus groups and drawing in different people from those underrepresented groups in the same way which had been done previously with the Spatial Development Plan. It would be essential to engage as widely as possible but in a targeted way and he would be happy to share those details separately.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report be noted.

61. LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY SOCIAL VALUE POLICY AND FRAMEWORK

Louise Outram, Deputy Chief Legal Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, updated the Chair and Members of the Transport Committee on the progress to develop a Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Social Value Policy and framework to support its implementation. The Social Value Policy and Framework had been approved at the Combined Authority's meeting on 4th March 2022.

Transport Committee Members had been involved in social value considerations for some time now and had been urging the organisation to state its policy. The policy had been developed in synergy with the Corporate Plan and around Fairer, Greener and Stronger communities and the organisation generally. It was designed to align with the organisation's plan and there were some specific transport considerations highlighted at paragraph 4.4 of the report. As could be seen from paragraph 4.6 there were areas for future development and paragraph 6 talked about identifying further developments in the future.

Councillor Ged Philbin stated that social value related to a whole host of things and not just transport. It was also related to things like planning. Organisations

seemed to go for large developments in order to cram as many houses on a site as possible with space that was not really suitable for modern day transport. Local transport tended to have a bit of a snob value and it would be necessary to start to change that by making sure developers made accommodation for transport links. That was the connection between the transport and social values that it would be necessary to take on board.

Councillor Gordon Friel thought that this was an excellent report to include within the area of transport. It was a very complex subject, and he knew there had been a push on completing equality impact assessments and that had now been embedded within the organisation and he felt that this was something he would also like to see taken forward in that manner. He felt that it linked to the Metro Mayor's 2021 Manifesto that no-one should be left behind in this City Region. He referred to the question that had been asked earlier by Councillor Rowe in relation to the costs for the Boxing Day rail service, but he highlighted the fact that the social value or health value of a service was seldom considered.

Councillor Liam Robinson noted that this was a Combined Authority policy of which transport was a subset. He thought that this was a journey and not an end destination. The whole principle of social value had been maximised in our impact as an organisation to deliver the maximum good for the public and the area that it served. A lot of the things that had been highlighted at this stage it would be necessary to get on and do but other things quite rightly would then come forward which would need to be included in that journey going forward. He felt that one of the key areas was how the Fair Employment Charter would be rolled out across the transport network locally as that was one of the most important ways that value could be maximised to the thousands of people that worked in the transport industry locally. There was also a huge opportunity around procurement and how the value of the taxpayer spend that the authority was responsible for could be maximised for the local economy so that it found its way back in the pockets of local people. He suggested that perhaps on an annual basis the transport related elements of this should come back to Committee to monitor progress and to consider future requirements across the network.

RESOLVED - That:

- (i) the draft Liverpool City Region Social Value Policy and Framework in Appendix 1 of this document, be noted; and
- (ii) the exploration of the transport specific implications of the Social Value Framework at the meeting, be noted.

62. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Sarah Johnston, Assistant Director Finance, presented a report which provided the Members of the Transport Committee with details of Merseytravel's financial performance for the period April 2021 through to 31 January 2022. The report also provided projections for the outturn position to the end of the financial year.

The budget setting for 2021/22 had probably been one of the most challenging years due to Covid and it had been set against the backdrop of considerable uncertainty and Members would recall as part of the budget setting report that this risk had been flagged in the report. It could be seen that the budget had been fairly prudent, and it was projected that at the end of the year there would

be a small outturn. That had been in part to do with being slightly overly prudent in certain areas around income.

Table 1 provided a breakdown of expenditure at service level and there was a more granular breakdown of that included at Appendix 1. The impact of the projected outturn position was that the use of Merseytravel reserves would be lower than projected and that was also the same for the application of reserves coming through from the Combined Authority which was due to the fact that rolling stock and tunnels would spend slightly less than anticipated.

There was a similar position in respect of capital which again had been set against a very challenging backdrop. It was noted in Table 2 that it was projected that around 85% of the capital budget for the year would be spent which was positive news given the position we had been in. Again more detailed information had been included in Appendix 2.

Taking account of the projected revenue and capital position that meant that less Merseytravel reserves had been used and therefore there was more there at projected year end. There had been a significant amount of risk included within the budget but moving towards the end of the year some of that had started to diminish as there had been more certainty around the outturn position. She highlighted the fact that notwithstanding that there was still a significant level of financial risk that the organisation would face going forward and that had been outlined in respect of the budget for the next financial year at paragraph 3.8.

Councillor Steve Foulkes stated that the report was clear and transparent and different in some respects as it had tried to move beyond the date that it had been set. Paragraph 3.8 indicated the trends of where the risks were. He asked if there was any further information in respect of the Beatles Story. He suggested that financial reports should come further up the agenda so all your decision making was set as you went through the agenda based on the current financial situation. Financial matters tended to come at the end of the agenda in Wirral and also in the Combined Authority but if the budget situation was clear at the start of the agenda then any following aspirations would fall in line further down the agenda. This might be something which could be taken forward in the new year.

Councillor Foulkes felt that this was a good report and we had planned very much for the worse situation which had not happened and therefore the position was better than had been anticipated but we still faced a tough challenge. He referred to the fact that Wirral had faced a very significant budget deficit which required lots of difficult decisions to be made. He had recently sat in a meeting with two mainstream parties who had refused to set a legal budget. They had actually voted not to set a budget in tough financial times and if a budget was not set then jobs would not be safe. Councillor Liam Robinson added that Wirral was not the only authority who had not set a budget.

Gary Evans, Assistant Director for Customer Delivery responded that in terms of the Beatles Story, the trends were positive but figures were certainly nowhere near pre-pandemic levels. The challenge around the Beatles Story was that it relied upon overseas visitors and for the past two years travel restrictions had been in place and confidence had been lost. There had been an increase in local or UK visitor numbers but that had not translated into the total which would usually have been seen from overseas. Visitor numbers had been around 50% and over the February half term period that had reached up to 80%. Bookings were slightly up but not to the levels seen pre-pandemic but definitely a positive trend. The same applied to Mersey

Ferries in some ways. This year would see a return to some of the cruises - Manchester Ship Canal and Liverpool Bay cruises which had been suspended over the last two years. Occupancy levels on the Manchester Ship Canal cruise was 80% plus and Liverpool Bay cruises was already 60% plus and this was very early in the season which was unprecedented. In respect of bus and rail the trend was up but the demand was different so it was about learning what that new demand and trend was like before the financial issues we faced could be understood. There were challenges and the report had highlighted those but there was nothing that was a concern.

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson thanked Sarah Johnson and her team for the report as it covered a lot of what had been very detailed and tough work over the last 12 months of the pandemic. The report was very user friendly as it was straight forward for any member of the public to pick up and it gave a true snapshot which was vital for the authority and the public that it served. The report set out the future success of the organisation, and the fact that its budget was inextricably linked to the success of the public transport network and in that respect it would be necessary to ensure that the focus was on the recovery post Covid of how the public transport network would be prioritised as the first choice for people to get around the region. Obviously the brand new trains which would be introduced later in the year would be a key part of that. All the bus reforms that the Combined Authority and the Mayor had been championing were also a key part of that as well. But it was only possible to do those things if the right budget settlement from Government was received because the budget had to set the tone for what it was possible to achieve. It was therefore vital that there were no funding reductions for the rail network and actually in the BSIP submission made to government the authority had been asked to put in place a very ambitious bid to government. An indication of what that settlement would be was still awaited which would need to be delivered upon as soon as possible to make sure that public transport in the long term would be the first choice for local people to get around. That was the most important part of the long term financial success as a region.

RESOLVED - That the contents of the report be noted.

63. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Question received from Mr James Owen:

“As the new transport policy is rolled out. Will Halton resident pensioners at last get equal rights on travelling on the buses and trains in line with the other five boroughs.”

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson thanked Mr Owen for his question and advised that as he could not attend the meeting today a formal written response would be provided to him within 10 working days following the meeting.

The Chair added that he assumed Mr Owen was primarily talking about concessionary travel and the differences that existed between Halton and the five previous Merseyside districts. It was important to say that had been down to historic arrangements which had led to some of the financial differences between Halton and the five former Merseyside boroughs. It was important to state that it would not be straightforward to open up and whilst there had been ongoing work to look at ways in which the transport network could be consolidated across the City Region including looking at what could be done around concessionary travel, obviously there was still more work to do for Halton and for the other five boroughs to be able to take a longer term decision.

So there was no definitive answer other than the fact that we were continuing to look at it because it was important for everyone living across the City Region. Mr Owen would of course receive a formal written response within 10 working days.

64. PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS

The following statement was submitted by the Association of Community Organisations for Reform Now (ACORN):

“Liverpool City Region: Franchise the Bus Network Bring buses under public control NOW!

The privatisation of the bus network has been disastrous for the people of our city. Prices are too high and the ticketing system too complicated with multiple operators requiring different tickets. There are unacceptable gaps in the network and no night bus service.

The result is people experiencing huge difficulty just to get to hospital, to work or to see friends or family. We see how this disproportionately impacts disabled people, people in poverty and/or in insecure work.

We, the undersigned demand the public franchising of the bus network in Liverpool, and:

I. Affordable fares that work for all

Fares should be no higher than those in London. We need lower daily spending limits, cheaper day-tickets and a London-style “hopper fare”. If it’s good enough for London, it’s good enough for Liverpool.

II. Routes that work for the people of Merseyside

We need a bus service with routes that work for people, not for profit. Focus should be on serving the people of the city, not just the most profitable routes. New routes connecting the north and south of the city to each other and to the city centre.

III. A bus network that is accountable to the people of Merseyside

As part of the public consultation process, ACORN Liverpool wants to see options for new forms of public accountability, to give bus users and workers the power to hold the services accountable. These options should include a citizen’s assembly for transport.

IV. The return and expansion of night buses across the region

A publicly franchised bus network should provide a cheap, safe option for hospitality and healthcare workers to be able to get home after a shift without spending an hour’s wages on a taxi. It should also provide safe routes home for those enjoying a night out in our wonderful city of culture. This means the return of the 86N night bus, plus the extension of multiple routes across the city and region.

We, the undersigned demand the public franchising of the bus network in Liverpool. “

The Chair, Councillor Liam Robinson, confirmed that a detailed formal response would be given to ACORN within the next ten days and that would obviously point them to the detailed report which had been presented to the Combined Authority the previous week at which the Mayor and the Combined

Authority agreed to proceeding with bus franchising. He added that he very much appreciated the campaigning that groups such as ACORN were doing. It was important that when you looked at the number of people who had signed this petition it showed that there were a lot of people who were passionate about this issue. He also made the point that a number of the elements within the petition were things that bus franchising would allow us to be able to do, for example, the way that routes were planned, the way that the network would be accountable and the way that night buses could be reintroduced across the region. The decision of the Combined Authority was not the final decision because of the way that the legislation of the Bus Services Act 2017 worked. There were still a few more months of statutory processes to go through such as audits and consultation before a final decision could be taken but obviously the City Region had indicated that bus franchising was its preferred model so he looked forward to working with ACORN and any other organisation that expressed an interest in this matter in the future.

Councillor Steve Foulkes felt that the petition was in line with what the Authority was trying to achieve but some would be more achievable than others but he did not think the position in terms of being able to consult on the franchising option should go without some sort of comment and personally he moved from the floor a vote of thanks to the Chair for the leadership of this organisation and also to Officers who had done a tremendous amount of work in building that evidence up and presenting it in an impartial fashion and to develop the business case to be able to answer this petition. He moved a vote of thanks to the Chair, Officers and all Members of the Transport Committee who had seen this programme to the beginning of the end.

Councillor Ken McGlashan said that this was the goal the Authority had been reaching for the last 20 odd years since deregulation. If it could get the sort of subsidy that London received then it would be able to do it. We had been working tirelessly over many years to get to this goal.

Councillor Robinson said that that was a fair point because obviously to provide London level fares a London level subsidy would be required and that was why we would keep on making that demand because we had put in a very ambitious submission and we needed that to be listened to by Government to make sure we could achieve as good a quality service as London received. It had never been right that different parts of the country did not get that. He appreciated the vote of thanks as it was a huge team effort. He had read the business case in detail and it was a really good piece of work and was testament to all the work that had been done and therefore it was right to recognise all of those people involved. There was still a lot more hard work that would be required over the next few months but as long as the focus was on the priority of always delivering the very best for the 1.6m people who called this region home, he was sure the right outcome would be achieved for the transport network.

65. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR

There were no urgent items of business.

Minutes 56 to 65 received as a correct record on the 7 day of July 2022.

Chair of the Transport Committee

(The meeting closed at 3.42 pm)