

---

**Secretariat memorandum**

Author : Tim Bellenger

Agenda item: 9

PC125

Drafted: 08.12.17

---

## **Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail**

### **1 Purpose of report**

- 1.1. To provide members with an understanding of the recent Government ‘command’ paper on the future of the rail network and Network Rail in particular.

### **2 Recommendation**

- 2.1. That members note the report, in particular the acknowledgement of the role of London TravelWatch, and;
- 2.2. Seek to pursue with the Office of Rail and Road, Network Rail and Department for Transport (DfT) measures to ensure common objectives for each Network Rail Route Supervisory Board set out in paragraph 4.4 for the benefit of passengers.

### **3 Background**

- 3.1. On 29 November 2017 the DfT published ‘*Connecting people; a strategic vision for rail*<sup>1</sup>’. This paper sets out the intentions of government policy for the future of the rail industry.
- 3.2. There are many laudable aims and schemes in the paper including:
- Improvements in reliability and reduced disruption to passenger journeys by increased spending on Network Rail asset renewals
  - More ‘alliancing’ between Network Rail and train operating companies and the establishment of ‘route supervisory boards’ for the devolved Network Rail ‘routes’
  - More digital technology
  - An expanded network
  - More smart ticketing and discounted travel (e.g. 26-30 Railcard)
  - Improved passenger compensation
  - A new passenger ombudsman
  - Improved accessibility

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/strategic-vision-for-rail>

3.3 There is also an assumption of greater private sector involvement and investment in the railway, whether this be sale of property assets or funding and financing of new stations and routes.

## 4 Issues arising

### Network Rail route supervisory reports

4.1 The closer working relationship between train operators and Network Rail whether in 'alliances' or working through bodies such as the 'route supervisory boards' is the area that has the largest impact on passengers journeys. This is because the method of working and the incentives for success or penalties for failure will determine how reliable services are and whether sufficient capacity is provided at the times needed. How these work will be determined by the extent and nature of regulation of Network Rail by the regulator (Office of Rail and Road) and by how the Route Supervisory Boards operate for each route.

4.2 In the London area, there are six Network Rail routes (Southeastern, Wessex, Western, London North Western, London North Eastern and Anglia), that each have a route managing director and will have a separate route supervisory board. Each route, with the exception of Anglia, which also includes the orbital North London Line, is based on the main radial routes from the central London termini stations. As such there is no one route that has overall responsibility for London. This is in contrast to other metropolitan areas in the United Kingdom which are managed by one single 'route'. Devolution of responsibility to the routes could be considered beneficial to passengers because of more accountability and focus. However, there is a potential for diverging policies, priorities and practice within the London area, with a potential dis-benefit for passengers, as a result of a less co-ordinated approach to London.

4.3 It would therefore seem important to have some common measures of success that all Network Rail routes work towards, and for there to be a mechanism for ensuring that impacts on the London area is considered not only by the routes themselves but also in a co-ordinated fashion.

4.4 Common measures that passengers would benefit from include:

- Reliability – Public Performance Measure, Right Time Arrival and Right Time en route
- Amounts of Delay Repay compensation paid to passengers and the number of claims
- Consistency – measures of the reliability of individual trains over time
- Safety on train and on platforms, including slips, trips and falls
- Crowding on trains and stations
- Travelling environment metrics such as levels of graffiti, lineside rubbish and vegetation presence/clearance, availability of free to use toilets and seating at stations

- Accessibility – percentage of stations fully and partially accessible, and where excessive step gaps exist between the train and platform, monitoring of ‘Passenger Assist and Turn Up and Go’ bookings per station

### **Greater involvement of the private sector in rail infrastructure provision**

- 4.5 Additional financing and funding of rail infrastructure either through Network Rail or separate companies such as East West Rail for the Oxford–Bedford–Cambridge route is welcome. However, where private sector investment does take place there needs to be clear regulation of any charges made by private investors of the use of facilities such as new stations or lines, to ensure that such charges are reasonable, do not inhibit competition and do not result in additional charges to passengers. New stations at and new rail links to airports are a case in point. For example, Heathrow Airport’s proposals for a charging mechanism on the Heathrow Express Railway were rejected because of concerns relating to these sorts of issues .
- 4.6 There are a number of areas where private sector financing of rail infrastructure is likely to take place. These will include new and improved stations, and potential new rail links to development sites. This is welcome, but needs to be balanced to the extent that passenger interests are not overridden by the need to make commercial returns. Examples might include stations being dominated by retail units or advertising to an extent that passengers find it difficult to find their trains or ticket retailing (London Waterloo prior to the development of the balcony scheme illustrates this) or the use of viaduct arches for industrial uses, which in the event of a fire mean the suspension of train services (numerous incidents prior to a clamp down on such uses by Network Rail in the early 2010s).

### **Greater collaboration between Network Rail and train operating companies**

- 4.7 The command paper indicates that franchises for train operating companies will involve a much higher level of collaboration with Network Rail than has been previously the case. This is to be encouraged, as it should enable better outcomes for passengers. It does, however, assume that there are sufficient means of incentivising operators to manage Network Rail through contract or other relationships. It is worth noting that performance on TfL Rail and London Overground has significantly improved over previous operators because of the use of a penalty on the train operator of a percentage of Network Rail’s payments as a result of disruption attributable to them.

### **Passenger benefits**

- 4.8 The paper also makes commitments to making smart ticketing available across most of the rail network by the end of 2018 and extending discounting travel by the introduction of a 26-30 Railcard.
- 4.9. Smart ticketing will have implications for ticket offices and it should be expected that as a result use of ticket offices in their current form will decline. This may result in further applications to close ticket offices by train operators at a later date.
- 4.10 The 26-30 Railcard is an extension of the existing 16-25 Railcard and will also apply to Oyster-based off-peak fares on the Transport for London network. It is designed to address affordability issues for this age group and is being developed by the Rail Delivery Group on a commercial basis without additional government support. To be

successful it needs to attract revenue generative passengers who would not otherwise use rail.

- 4.11 The government restates its commitment to Delay Repay 15 which pays compensation for delays starting at 15 minutes. This is a welcome endorsement of London TravelWatch policy and influence.
- 4.12 The government restates its commitment also to the Rail Passenger Ombudsman scheme and also acknowledges the role of London TravelWatch and Transport Focus in holding operators to account and informing the industry on what passengers want.

### **Improved accessibility**

- 4.13 The paper recognises that accessibility is not just limited to step free access, although this is important, and it continues funding for Access for All schemes : but commits itself to do more for those with hidden disabilities and training staff to show empathy, compassion and assistance to those who need it.
- 4.14 This acknowledgement is good, but London TravelWatch research indicates that for passengers in general, not just those with disabilities, investment in accessibility is seen as giving added value for money.

## **5 London TravelWatch work prioritisation criteria**

- 5.1 The command paper will affect all rail journeys within the London TravelWatch area, and therefore it is a priority for London TravelWatch.

## **6 Equalities and inclusion implications**

- 6.1. This report poses no specific equalities and inclusion implications.

## **7 Financial implications**

- 7.1. The extension of smart ticketing may result in more proposals by train operators to close ticket offices under schedule 17 of the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, as passengers switch away from paper based tickets..

## **8 Legal powers and financial implications**

- 8.1. Section 252B of the same Act places a similar duty on the Committee in respect of users or potential users of railway services provided wholly or partly within the “London railway area” as defined under the provisions of the Railways Act 1993.