

## Transport and the Environment Board

Thursday, 15 December 2022

### Rail Issues Update

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<b>Is the paper exempt from the press and public?</b>	No
<b>Reason why exempt:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Purpose of this report:</b>	Discussion
<b>Is this a Key Decision?</b>	No
<b>Has it been included on the Forward Plan of Key Decisions?</b>	Not a Key Decision

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#### **Director Approving Submission of the Report:**

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#### **Executive Summary**

This report updates Members on a number of current rail issues. These include train service performance; recent and planned timetable changes; Integrated Rail Plan strategic rail priorities; Restoring Your Railways progress; and Great British Railways.

#### **What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?**

SYMCA's plans to fix the poor rail connections in our region will help to boost the flow of people, ideas and businesses both within South Yorkshire and to other parts of the North and the rest of the country.

#### **Recommendations**

TEB members are recommended to note and discuss the content of the report and advise if there are items that should be considered in more detail at future Board meetings.

#### **Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel**

N/A

## 1. Background

1.1 The rail industry is continuing to recover from the Covid pandemic, when many services were withdrawn and passenger numbers plummeted. During that time, working from home became the norm and this trend has continued to some extent for office workers, with part time office working firmly established and commuting still well down on pre-Covid numbers. Leisure travel has bounced back however, with rail patronage almost back to pre-Covid levels on predominantly leisure routes. The rail industry is responding to this changing pattern of demand and adapting services to match it. At the same time as it has been recovering from the pandemic, the rail industry has been affected by industrial action by the rail trades unions which has caused widespread disruption and damaged the recovery.

1.2 In the face of these ongoing challenges, the rail industry has been planning to provide an increase in services for the December timetable change. Planning is also underway for the May 2023 timetable change. Alongside this, longer term planning is underway to expand the rail network by investing in significant infrastructure and service enhancements, arising from the Government's Integrated Rail Plan and Restoring Your Railways programme, and the Network Rail enhancement and electrification programmes. Further detail on these issues and their impact on South Yorkshire is set out below.

## 2. Key Issues

### 2.1 Current Performance Issues

Five Northern Mayors including the South Yorkshire Mayor met the Secretary of State for Transport Mark Harper in Manchester on the 30th November to raise concerns about the poor performance of rail services in North and the need for a resolution of the rest day working dispute and improved reliability. The meeting received widespread media coverage.

Industrial relations disputes between the rail trade unions, train operating companies (TOCs) and Network Rail continue, with further industrial action proposed that will heavily impact the rail timetable. Alongside this, many rail staff have been on long term sick leave; catching up with training; leaving the passenger train operators for freight operators; or taking early retirement. This has led to severe driver shortages and widespread cancellations, particularly on TransPennine Express (TPE). TPE have apologised for the recent poor service on the South Route between Manchester, Sheffield, Doncaster and Cleethorpes, and are working hard to reinstate a reliable timetable.

Since Covid, the North of England has been at the forefront of the growth back in passenger numbers – regularly outstripping growth elsewhere on the network. At the time of writing, major stations in the North stood at 87% of pre-covid demand compared to London stations at 71%. In October Northern Trains Limited (NTL) reported its third highest revenue week ever indicating the strength of the market and the potential for further growth.

### 2.2 December 2022 timetable changes

The rail industry has two major timetable changes every year, in May and December, which have long lead in times to plan involving consultation with

partners. The December 2022 timetable change saw a number of NTL services reinstated that were withdrawn during the Covid pandemic. These include the reintroduction of the train service between Doncaster and Scunthorpe which has been a replacement bus service for the past year. Four services a day will resume on the Sheffield to Gainsborough Central stopping route, but not the full hourly pre-Covid service. The Sheffield to Adwick and Sheffield to Leeds via Dearne Valley services become hourly, reinstating a two trains per hour service to Rotherham Central, which has had a much reduced service for the past year or more.

### 2.3 **May 2023 timetable plans**

Rail industry plans are also underway for the May 2023 timetable changes, which SYMCA expects to provide a further uplift in services, though it is not yet clear what will be delivered and with inflation at c10% this will have an impact on costs.

SYMCA are engaging with Cross Country Trains to seek the restoration of the Reading to Newcastle via Doncaster service in May 2023, which was withdrawn during the Covid pandemic due to low demand.

Plans for a significant recast of the East Coast Mainline timetable, which were going to be introduced in May 2022, were put on hold due to objections. It was intended to introduce the changes in May 2023 but it is still not clear if this will happen. The plans include a partial return of the additional Cross Country service.

There is a plan to introduce a second fast train per hour between Sheffield and Leeds in May 2023. This was originally a Northern franchise commitment before the Government took over that franchise in 2020.

SYMCA will be requesting that Northern reinstate remaining services that were withdrawn during Covid in May 2023.

### 2.4 **Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) priorities**

Following presentations and discussions at previous TEB meetings, the SYMCA Post-IRP Positioning Plan was approved at the Mayoral Combined Authority meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November. Officers are now developing SYMCA's plans for short-term lobbying. These relate to a number of rail enhancements that are either in the pipeline or which have a strong chance of being delivered in the next few years, alongside longer term IRP projects are being planned and need to be influenced now.

The first anniversary of the publication of the IRP on 18<sup>th</sup> November was marked by joint media interviews between the SYMCA Mayor and the West Yorkshire Mayor at Sheffield and Leeds stations, which received widespread coverage. Their message was that the Government is not delivering the IRP and needs to invest more in rail in Yorkshire and the North. The Mayors called for the urgent commencement of the study on how to take HS2 from the East Midlands to Leeds. This study is crucial to define the route for HS2 to reach Leeds and then lift the safeguarding of the HS2 route through South Yorkshire if it is not required.

### 2.5 **Restoring Your Railways update**

The Barrow Hill Line scheme is now progressing to Outline Business Case, having been approved by Government to go forward in June 2022. Detailed work is underway led by Network Rail, with local partners including SYMCA inputting

through a Project Steering Group. This work is looking at what is needed to deliver a phase one scheme by 2025, which could include up to three new stations on the line and one train per hour between Chesterfield and Sheffield Midland. Phase two could then enhance the passenger offer either by rail or tram.

SYMCA submitted two Strategic Outline Business Cases to the Government for the reintroduction of passenger services on the Don Valley Line between Sheffield Victoria and Stocksbridge, and the Askern Line between Doncaster and Knottingley at the end of September. The business cases are currently being assessed by the Government's and a decision on whether the schemes can progress to Outline Business Case stage is expected in 2023. SYMCA also submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case for a new station at Waverley on the border of Sheffield and Rotherham at the end of November 2021, and is still awaiting a decision from the Government whether this scheme can progress.

## 2.6 **Great British Railways update**

The legislation to establish Great British Railways (GBR) was deferred in September due to pressure on Parliamentary time. The then Transport Secretary said it could be reintroduced in May 2023. The current position on GBR and implementation of the Williams-Shapps White Paper remains unclear. This means that a decision on the headquarters for GBR has also been delayed. Doncaster was one of four cities shortlisted having submitted a strong bid.

GBRTT's regional partnership team is working to give locally elected leaders a greater say over how their railways are run through establishing collaborative partnership agreements for rail in their area, including greater influence over local ticketing, services and stations. The team is exploring with West Midlands and Greater Manchester what a partnership could look like as trailblazer devolution areas. There is already some degree of rail devolution in some areas such as London, Merseyside and the North East, as well as Wales and Scotland.

## 3. **Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

### 3.1 **Option 1**

SYMCA continues to work closely with TfN, DfT and rail industry partners to develop rail improvements for the region and secure investment in South Yorkshire's rail network. Delivery of the IRP depends on working closely with Government and rail industry partners to maximise the benefits of planned investment and secure service and infrastructure enhancements.

### 3.2 **Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**

Despite SYMCA's efforts, there could be a risk that we are unable to secure investment and improvements to the South Yorkshire rail network. The development and implementation of the Positioning Plan is therefore critical.

### 3.3 **Option 2**

SYMCA adopts a passive role and does not actively engage with the rail industry to seek rail service and infrastructure enhancements.

### 3.4 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

South Yorkshire does not secure significant rail service and infrastructure

Improvements, and its economy and connectivity suffers as a result.

### 3.5 **Recommended Option**

Option 1

### 4. **Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 SYMCA will continue to engage with rail industry partners and processes and support and respond to external consultations as appropriate.

### 5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 N/A

### 6. **Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### 7. **Legal Implications and Advice**

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### 8. **Human Resources Implications and Advice**

8.1 There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report.

### 9. **Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

9.1 There are no quality and diversity implications arising from this report. Equality and diversity are considered at a scheme and programme level.

### 10. **Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 Rail travel is more sustainable and less impactful on climate change than private motor vehicle or air travel. Therefore encouraging a modal shift to rail travel supports net-zero and climate ambitions. Electrification and decarbonisation of the railways also contributes towards these aims.

### 11. **Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

11.1 There are no ICT implications arising from this report.

### 12. **Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**

12.1 Improving public transport is a significant priority for the Mayor and MCA and this paper outlines both the challenge and opportunity in demonstrably leading on these improvements.

12.2 Communications and Marketing resourcing and budget requirements should be considered alongside the recommendations put forward within this paper.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix A - Table of rail services changes in South Yorkshire in December 2022.

### **Background Papers**

None

## Appendix A

Northern Trains Reinstated Services for the December 2022 timetable change	
Route	Change
Sheffield - Worksop - Gainsborough	Reinstated four services per day Monday to Saturday - two am, two pm.
Sheffield – Cleethorpes via Brigg (Saturday only)	Service reinstated - 3 Passenger services each way Saturday only.
York to Sheffield via Pontefract Baghill	Service reinstated - 3 Passenger services each way Mon to Sat.
Leeds - Sheffield stopping service via Barnsley	Hourly service with the 05:54 Leeds to Sheffield reinstated
Doncaster - Scunthorpe	Return to 8 services a day Mon to Sat
Sheffield - Adwick	Hourly service, withdrawn services reinstated.
Leeds to Sheffield Via Dearne	Hourly service, withdrawn services reinstated
Sheffield to Manchester	Routine hourly calling pattern to Hope Valley Rail Stations
Sheffield to Doncaster, Hull and Scarborough	No Change
Leeds to Nottingham via Wakefield Kirkgate and Barnsley	Hourly service. However the 20:04 Leeds to Nottingham will terminate at Chesterfield. The 22:25 will not be reinstated (due to path to/from Nottingham not available)
Leeds to Lincoln	No Change
Huddersfield to Sheffield	No Change