

20th February 2009

RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT MERSEYSIDE ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

1. Introduction

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing the interests of all public transport users in North West England. The key objectives of TWNW are to:-

- § Give users a platform to express their concerns and needs
- § Promote the use of public transport in the North West
- § Contribute to the development of regional transport strategies
- § Produce influential best practice reports based on evidence

We welcome the opportunity to comment on this draft RUS.

2. Overview

There has been a considerable improvement in rail services on Merseyside over past few years and the challenge in the future is to meet the capacity requirements of an increasing passenger demand.

The RUS deals mainly with the current Merseyrail Electrics routes and assumes that the adjacent RUS's will deal with the connecting routes out of Liverpool. The other routes are listed in the gaps, but there is very little new information regarding their role in the network.

3. Liverpool Central

The overcrowding indicated and experienced at Liverpool Central station on the Northern Line requires an immediate remedy, but this should not be a short term expedient. Any work done to alleviate this situation must provide a long-term solution to the problem. As this would need to be a highly technical solution, TWNW would not wish to comment on the actual design of the revised station layout at this stage.

4. Rolling Stock

When the current stock is replaced in 2014, sufficient new trains must be ordered to allow for regular six car services on all routes where there is sufficient demand. This stock needs to be formed of high capacity vehicles with easy access but with standards of comfort approaching as closely as possible to the private car, including air conditioning. Ambient temperatures are likely to increase in future. Due to the short journey times on these routes, it would be reasonable to have vehicles without toilet facilities, but these facilities should be available at stations.

5. Chester to Liverpool (via Hooton)

The Wirral Line service would benefit from the service frequency improvements mentioned in the document and the half hourly service levels at Bache and Capenhurst are currently sufficient for passenger requirements. If a shuttle service is to be provided for the Ellesmere Port branch, consideration should be given for extending the electrification to Helsby. This route has been labelled many times as having no business case for improvement. Although there may be very few passengers using the current service, the extremely poor timetable offered self evidently discourages a higher level of use. A regular service introduced at reasonable times would attract passengers working at the large industrial units along the line and give connections at Helsby.

6. Chester to Liverpool (via Liverpool South Parkway)

Surveys undertaken by TravelWatch NorthWest have shown that many passengers from North Wales would use rail services to get to Liverpool John Lennon Airport (via Liverpool South Parkway) if a more direct service was available. The Halton Curve route would be ideal to serve this purpose, with the potential for through services between Chester and Liverpool using this route.

7. Liverpool to Wigan (via St. Helens)

The proposed increase in service by introducing an hourly semi-fast train is welcomed and will provide much needed capacity on this route.

8. Liverpool to Kirby and Skelmersdale

Transport links to Skelmersdale are below the level that would be expected for a town of this size. The introduction of a regular train service would provide a much needed transport facility which would lead to the regeneration of the Skelmersdale area. Combined with the possible new station at Headbolt Lane, this would provide extra passengers and revenue and provide help to the business case for train strengthening on this route.

9. Liverpool to North Merseyside

The options set out as BNM2 and BNM5 would provide the basic service required for this area and the option BNM5 is favoured for the extra links provided to the Aintree area. If the costs involved are not much greater, then the BNM3 BNM6 options should be considered.

10. Liverpool to Kirby and Preston

The options provided in the Lancashire and Cumbria RUS should be taken forward to improve the service from Ormskirk to Preston with the provision of facilities to allow future through running to Liverpool included.

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