

YHTAR Focus

Newsletter of the
Yorkshire and The Humber
Transport Activists' Roundtable

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Public Transport Users can lead the way to Rural Recovery

by YHTAR's chairman, Colin Speakman

Until the mid-nineteenth century, Foot and Mouth Disease was, as it still is in many other countries of the world, regarded as little more than a kind cattle flu, from which even with the limited range of remedies which were available at that time, 95% of animals recovered, albeit with some loss of weight.

The slaughter policy was brought in at the behest of wealthy pedigree herd breeders in the latter part of the century, in order to protect their lucrative export markets by guaranteeing 100% virus free stock. In an age before motorways – up to the 1960s – and daily mass movement of livestock by road transport, this fairly barbaric policy still made some kind of sense. The 2001 epidemic has, through the combined incompetence of MAFF (now DEFRA), the NFU and the farming industry generally, produced the worst economic crisis in rural Britain since World War II, with many rural businesses facing disaster. Rather than facing endless closure notices and continuing ignorant paranoia, visitors and their spending power have simply stayed away, with the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors being among the worst affected areas of the UK. For every £1 lost to farming, other rural business have lost £9, without any of the compensation available to livestock farmers.

After almost a year, the nightmare is coming to an end, with most areas in our region now being officially "open" and most footpaths finally available to walkers (despite not a single case of F&M in Britain ever

having been shown to have been caused by walkers using footpaths).

Thanks to a wide variety of schemes, including Rural Bus Grant and Rural Transport Partnership schemes, there are now in fact, perhaps some of the best ever rural bus services operating in areas such as the Yorkshire Dales, Peak District and South Pennines. For the first time ever, the popular 800 Dalesbus will operate from Wakefield, Leeds, Ilkley to Bolton Abbey and Wharfedale every Sunday throughout the winter. Malham has a new direct Saturday service from Wakefield and Leeds. (See article on page 4.)

Despite Arriva's cuts, most train services are now operating seven days a week along the Settle-Carlisle line, whilst the Peak District and the South Pennines are two areas which now have an excellent range of both weekday and weekend train and bus service. Winter Coastliner and Moorsbus services

continued overleaf

YHTAR is most grateful
to Arriva plc for its
sponsorship of this
newsletter, which
allows us to distribute
Focus to a wide
audience.



ARRIVA

Rural Recovery – continued

take you to the heart of the North York Moors even before Moorsbus services begin again next Easter. Many bargain tickets such as Day Rover and Peak Wayfarer tickets cut the price of a day out by sustainable transport

It is a well known fact that public transport users are more dependent on rural services and facilities such as cafes and pubs than motorists who bring everything with them. The countryside, with its open views, soft colours and crisp clear days is every bit as lovely in winter as it is in the summer months. Never to such a degree before have the shops, cafes and pubs of the Yorkshire countryside needed winter visitors to come and spend their cash.

So why not do your bit for the Dales, Moors, Pennines or Peak, and plan some days out by bus or train this Christmas Holiday period or at New Year, to rediscover the paths and trails that have been too long denied us, and help rural recovery in the best possible way. If you want details of bus services and train times currently available, try either the Countrygoer (www.countrygoer.org) or Dalesbus (www.dalesbus.org.uk) websites – or even YHTAR's own (www.yhtar.org.uk)!!

Car Clubs Driving Into Yorkshire

Two exciting new Rural Car Clubs projects have now been set up in our region. Supported by the Countryside Agency through Carplus – the Car Share Network, the new projects are located in Hebden Bridge and the Colne Valley.

The car share club is seen as an important solution to rural transport deficiencies. Very simply, a car club can be formed by a community or group of individuals who then lease a car or cars through Carplus. This car is kept centrally in the village or town and can be hired by members of the club for as little as £2 per hour.

Two main groups of people will benefit from the establishment of a car club. The first are those families and individuals that do not own a car, but need occasional access to a vehicle. The second group are those that are seeking to discard a rarely used second car with all its financial and environmental drawbacks, or even those who may not need their own car at all.



Groups throughout the country are being spurred into action to form a car club to solve their local transport problems, which include traffic and parking congestion, pollution and social exclusion.

Carplus is now looking for groups who may be interested in setting up their own club and who would benefit from the help, support and funding that is available to help you start a car club in your community.

Please call Simon Parker, Carplus Yorkshire Project Officer, on 01759 368545 or e-mail: simon@carclubs.org.uk. Alternatively call the Carplus office on 0113 234 9299 or e-mail: info@carclubs.org.uk

Cycling.... and Stephen Norris

The new Chair of the National Cycling Forum is Stephen Norris the former MP and Minister of Transport. This half a day a week job effectively puts him in charge of the delivery of the National Cycle Strategy (NCS).

The Forum is tasked with co-ordinating progress on the NCS and draws together representatives from central and local government, other public sector bodies, voluntary organisations and commercial interests. All of them have failed so far as the first and **central** target in the Strategy published in July 1996 was *a doubling the number of trips by cycle by 2002 and quadrupling it by 2012*. As cycling trips in England account for around

2% of all trips, and this percentage is falling slightly over all, clearly the first half of the target will not be achieved.

A recent count on the radial routes into Leeds for the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan claims a 5% increase in cycling trips. However 5% of approximately 1.2% of trips (the West Yorkshire figure) is very few trips. London seems to be the exception to the rule where levels of congestion are so great that cycling becomes the most efficient mode of travel by far.

Most campaigning cyclists are happy with the choice of Stephen Norris as he seems to be a doer. However he has had a few problems lately with his membership of quangos.

The Mayor of London, Ken Livingston terminated Mr Norris's membership of Transport for London on the grounds that there will be an alleged conflict of interest between membership of that body and his business interests, particularly those in the development sphere.

When leaving parliament, Stephen Norris is reputed to have said that he wished to spend more time with his money – so his business interests should come as no surprise. The real question is whether the Forum can now make up lost ground and deliver some progress.

Pam Ashton

YF and Sustainable Transport

*Jonathan Brown is the new Sustainable Development Manager Transport at Yorkshire Forward, one of a team of three recently recruited to develop sustainable development within YF. Jonathan has joined YF from Leeds City Council where he wrote bits of the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan and he says he has met a number of YHTAR members in the past in various capacities. In what is hoped will be a regular page in **Focus**, here Jonathan introduces YF and its remit in the area of sustainable transport.*

Yorkshire Forward is the Regional Development Agency for the Yorkshire and Humber Region, one of nine such agencies in England. Regional Development Agencies are public bodies established by the Government, which aim to co-ordinate regional economic development and regeneration, enable the regions to improve their relative competitiveness and reduce the imbalances that exist within and between regions.

The statutory purposes of Regional Development Agencies are:

- To further economic development and regeneration;
- To promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness;
- To promote employment;
- To enhance development and application of skill relevant to employment;
- To contribute to sustainable development.

Yorkshire Forward's board has made a clear commitment to promoting sustainable development, that is development which is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms, and has recently established a new sustainable development team. .

Good transport links are essential to the region's economic prosperity. After wide consultation, six regional economic transport priorities were identified in Yorkshire Forward's 10 year Regional Economic Strategy as the most pressing needs for transport improvement to support economic growth. These are:

- Better rail services between Leeds and Sheffield
- Transpennine links, particularly better rail passenger services and freight options
- Improved links to ports and waterways, in particular to the Humber ports
- Access to strategic economic zones, these include areas of South Yorkshire which are targeted for regeneration under the EU Objective 1 programme
- Improvements to the East Coast Main Line
- Regional air transport, in



Yorkshire Forward does not have direct responsibility for providing transport infrastructure or services, which is the role of local authorities, Government agencies and private companies. Yorkshire Forward's role is to work with these providers to ensure that the infrastructure and services provided and proposed meet the needs of the regional economy.

Most of the regional economic transport priorities call for improvements to public transport, or to sustainable modes such as waterway freight. This is because Yorkshire Forward recognises that there is a real need for significant expenditure on these sustainable modes if they are to play their full role in supporting economic growth.

Achieving improvements in these Regional Economic Transport Priorities will not be easy and will require major resource input and joint-working between many different providers. The Regional Economic Strategy aims to create a world-class, prosperous, sustainable economy and transport is essential to this vision. Yorkshire Forward has signalled its commitment to sustainable development, including transport, by establishing a dedicated team to take these issues forward. This team covers transport as

part of its brief and the main contact on the transport priorities is Jonathan Brown, Sustainable Development Manager – Transport, based at Yorkshire Forward's Leeds office. Jonathan can be contacted on tel: 0113 394 9781

e-mail:

Jonathan.Brown@Yorkshire-Forward.com

More information on Yorkshire Forward can be found at www.yorkshire-forward.com



Yorkshire & Humber

Regional Development Agency

National Awards for WY rural and urban bus services

Bus services in our region featured prominently in the National Bus Industry Awards announced in mid-November. The best way of getting people out of their cars and onto public transport is to offer the best services, let's hope these awards help raise people's awareness of how good buses can be these days!

Perhaps most relevant to the theme of this newsletter was that "The Bus in the Countryside Award" 2001 went to the West Yorkshire PTE (Metro) for its **Denby Dale Rural Transport Project**.

Developed by Metro in partnership with Denby Dale District Community Association, the Denby Dale Rural Transport Project has resulted in VillageLink bus services to nearby Clayton West, Emley, Skelmanthorpe and a ThroughLink service between Denby Dale and Wakefield.

The project has also resulted in an Interchange which has been constructed at Denby Dale to provide safe and level transfer between bus and rail services, and five community village shelters which include bespoke community and travel information and which have lighting and seating for greater passenger comfort and security.

Monitoring by Metro shows that around 65,000 journeys per year are being made on VillageLink and ThroughLink services, with around 50% of passengers choosing to use the bus rather than their car. Denby Dale Interchange has quickly become a local focus for bus and train services and is currently served by 112 buses each weekday.

Like other rural services across West Yorkshire, the VillageLink offers a parcel, prescription and message delivery service, variable routing and diversions for pre-booked passengers and specially trained drivers who can be contacted by 'phone en-route for information and to arrange pick-ups.

A further development in the scheme which Metro will be introducing next year is "real time" electronic information at stops which will give passengers accurate, up-to-the-minute bus arrival times.

The Denby Dale Rural Transport Project has been financed from a variety of sources including European Regional Development Fund and the Government's Rural Bus Subsidy Grant and Rural Bus Challenge Competitions. It was developed from work initially undertaken with the Denby Dale Partnership, a European Union Rechar 2 funded community group.

Promoting the service correctly has been key to the project. Because the services provide for the whole of several communities, the market for the project objectives is very varied. A range of timetables leaflets, newsletters and promotional material has been designed with clarity and ease of use in mind. Timetables are available for both routes in



An Arriva Yorkshire bus stands in the new guided busway along York Road in East Leeds. The 'elite' services along this route are also provided by First Leeds. The last time your editor travelled on this road by public transport was on the last Leeds tramcar, 42 years less one day before the opening of the new award-winning 'Elite' bus service – quite a difference in so many respects!! One can but muse as to where Leeds would be today if its 1950s city fathers had developed its renowned tram system instead of destroying it for political ends. Thank goodness for PTEs!

large typeface and in Braille and there is a minicom service for people with hearing difficulties. The distribution of promotional information is carefully targeted at the whole community, including door-to-door timetable and newsletter delivery to the whole parish.

Elite, the East Leeds' Quality Bus scheme gained two Bus Industry Awards: first prize in the Marketing Award for Local Authorities and Joint Projects, and second place in the Claudia Flanders Memorial Award for Accessibility.

Passengers throughout East Leeds can travel on new buses which, using a combination of guided busways and dedicated bus lanes, speed ahead of queuing traffic, leaving other motorists standing. Sensors and traffic lights enable buses to transfer safely from guided sections to bus lanes easily, and give priority to buses at junctions ensuring that the new Elite service lives up to its promise of a reliable and comfortable travelling experience. Elite's benefits can be felt far out into the surrounding areas affecting a population of over 100,000.

Reacting to news of the awards, Cllr Mick Lyons Chairman of the WYPTA said: "Winning awards from people who are in the industry and in the know is certainly an endorsement for the groundbreaking steps we are taking to develop public transport systems which will meet the demands of Leeds in the 21st Century. Cllr Brian Walker, Leader of Leeds City Council added: "The Elite scheme came about because of the definite need for a better alternative to car travel, as Leeds becomes more successful as a city and more congested on the roads. I'm extremely pleased and filled with pride that we now have moved towards an opportunity for the people on the east side of the city to be able to access the city and bypass all those queues of traffic on the guided busway part of the scheme." A (most welcome) far cry from the philosophy of the 50s and 60s which consigned the tram to history and gave us the "Leeds – motorway city" slogan as south Leeds disappeared under tarmac.

Both **First Bradford and Keighley & District Travel (K&D)** were finalists in the top 'Bus Operator of the Year' category, which was won jointly by Nottinghamshire-based Trent and Barton Buses. But **K&D** did come a very excellent second out of the 56 entrants, (jointly with Brighton & Hove) for the Award which is judged on quality of operation, financial performance, good practice in training, employee and customer relations, commercial performance, capital investment and market expansion. The judges said "Keighley & District showed strong evidence of good practice and

scored highly for its training efforts – evidenced in highly praised 'mystery traveller' checks".

K&D was also Highly Commended in the 'EUREKA!' category for successful one-off initiatives with its "Take the Bus for a Walk" map published last year in partnership with the WALK (Walking for All in Keighley) Project. The judges said; "The Walks Map was an imaginative partnership scheme to build marginal revenue on an existing network, with well-executed promotional material."

K&D's Managing Director Stuart

Wilde was delighted by the result; "To be ranked joint 2nd out of 56 UK bus companies is a considerable accolade! We achieved this by working as a team: drivers, engineers, fitters, cleaners, office staff, supervisors, in fact a cast of 250!

"I am particularly pleased by the very good impression given by our vehicles and our drivers to the 'mystery traveller' judges when they tested our services. We still have much to achieve however and I hope to be able to announce a package of new developments to coincide with the opening of the bus station in February."

Winter buses to the Dales

After a very successful summer, this winter sees a number of key leisure buses to the Dales continuing to run every week.

Wharfedale

The mainly hourly Sunday services from Keighley and Skipton to Grassington (67A) and Bolton Abbey (75) continue to run throughout the winter.

Service 800 will operate from West Yorkshire to Wharfedale and Hawes on Sundays throughout the year. This, in combination with Saturday services, will allow overnight weekend stays in the Dales. The Winter timetable runs until 24 March 2002.

Malham

The Malham service now runs every Saturday throughout the year. The bus runs through in the morning from Wakefield, Leeds, Bradford and Skipton, returning at tea-time, with extra buses between Skipton and Malham during the day. All journeys serve Skipton Rail Station. It is now operated by Arriva and this service will allow Saturday walks from Malham to Wharfedale or to Horton or Settle stations once the paths reopen, meantime some quiet lane walks are available.

There are also many other bus routes which run throughout the year, including mainly hourly weekday services from Northallerton to Hawes, and from Skipton to Grassington, with some journeys continuing to Buckden. Later journeys on the Skipton to Grassington route mean that there is now time for an evening pub meal before returning home! Buses operate approximately every two hours on weekdays from Ilkley to Grassington.

Details are available from the nationwide public enquiry line 0870 608 2608, or Dalesbus website <http://www.dalesbus.org>

More footpaths are re-opening...

...across the Dales, after the foot and mouth epidemic, but full details on the latest situation are available on the North Yorkshire County Council website... <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/footmouth/footpaths.asp>

The New Arrangement For Governance – More Work, Less Democracy?

A personal view by our Vice Chairperson, Pam Ashton

Most local authorities have adopted, or will adopt the cabinet style of governance. This may, or may not be, accompanied by an elected mayor. Transport activists are likely to be active campaigners at many levels, including local, county, regional and national. I have now arrived at the view that the new structures and processes at local level are less open to residents and less available for interested parties to feed in their views. This has a profound effect on me as a transport activist and leaves me with more work to do in order to monitor the actions of my local council as they affect me and other cyclists or sustainable transport protagonists. I would be very interested to hear the views of others on the way in which the new arrangements have affected them.

The first problem for activists is in understanding the new arrangements. I have learned from Bradford council's website that the executive committee

is the supreme decision-making body with more routine functions delegated to officers than before and four scrutiny committees overseeing the work of the council. This arrangement leaves cyclists in some difficulty for a start as cycling comes partly under two scrutiny committees – environment and development.

The next and major problem for anyone belonging to a city-wide, single interest group is that discussion and consultation takes place at five area panels. These panels consider proposals for their area but if the proposal is a road scheme it may impact on cyclists from all over the city. A recent example of this is a scheme outside a school which makes life less safe for cyclists (so much for safe routes to schools!) which is also on the route home from the Dales to north and west Bradford for cyclists. It went to Shipley Area Panel after being recommended for planning permission by officers. A transport

activist must spot all schemes such as this on the list of planning applications (on the Council's website) and must then attend the relevant area panel. An objection to the ensuing TROs (sent to all prescribed consultees) does not count as an objection to the scheme! Life was so much easier when there was a Transportation Committee with a six weekly meeting and an agenda which could be inspected.

The reasoning behind area panels seems to be that it takes local governance closer to where people live and has more relevance to them. This development came out of the Governments measures to reform local government and to increase the level of interest and participation in local democratic processes. I regard it as a failure on those terms and feel genuinely overburdened by the work that is necessary to be on top of all that is going on. Do others feel the same?

Vital Villages Scheme *What are your transport needs?*

Help is available for a short period only under The Countryside Agency's Vital Villages Scheme for Parish Councils to look at the transport needs in their parishes.

Completion of a survey of transport needs in their areas will enable them to access further funds under the **Parish Transport Grant** to introduce small scale, local solutions to identified transport problems.

Chris Marshall, The Countryside Agency says it is an ideal opportunity for parish councils to take stock of the

transport needs of their local communities. Help will be available until March 2002.

If you are interested in this support please write to Chris at the address below

requesting support for a transport needs survey:

Mr Chris Marshall
The Countryside Agency
4th Floor, Victoria Wharf
Sovereign Street
Leeds
LS1 4BA



**The
Countryside
Agency**

Another M-way for the region? the A1 Safety Study

Jim Burton, who was deeply involved with this recent process, discusses the background and some of the issues it raised

I was invited to join the Steering Group in August 1999, the first meeting of this Group being in Leeds on 7 September 1999 and the Inception Report is dated February 2000. The Final Report is dated December 2000, while the final date for responses was set at 12 March 2001.

The Steering Group met five times, the fifth meeting being held on 14 November 2000 to consider the draft final report by the consultants, Halcrow Fox. There were also two meetings of the Wider Reference Group (the first in York, the second in Harrogate) and two meetings of a small Design Group (of which I was a member) to consider the format of the Wider Group's meetings.

The Study covered the A1 from the A64 junction at Bramham northwards to Barton (near Scotch Corner).

In effect, the Report supported the raising to motorway standard those sections of the A1 between Bramham and Barton that are not already motorway, while recommending that certain short-term safety measures be taken as quickly as possible in order to reduce accident rates.

Upgrade

During the study, the points I raised were principally those related to the status of the investigation as a Safety Study. It was a prime contention of mine that the study should not therefore be used as a vehicle for increasing the capacity of the road, per se, to the exclusion of other issues – regarding which safety matters should clearly have been given top priority. Unfortunately these points were largely ignored and the final recommendation (predictably) came down in favour of upgrading the whole of the Barton to Bramham stretch to motorway, the voting being one against and everybody else in favour. My main points included:

- (i) Since the study was especially intended to emphasise safety aspects then it should have taken into account all the factors by which traffic using the A1 can cause fatalities. (This it signally failed to do. For example, there is convincing evidence which indicates that appreciably more deaths are caused by pollution due to road traffic, than as a direct physical result of the vehicles themselves. I raised this issue on a number of occasions, but it was ignored in the final analysis presented by Halcrow and has not been mentioned in the official report.)
- (ii) Similarly the differential speed factor (which is linked to pollution) was only dealt with insofar as it contributed directly to road accidents causing death and physical injuries. Speed management can be used positively as

a means of reducing the effects of traffic and traffic accidents: by controlling vehicles to run at speeds that are the most efficient for their performance (at present around 45-55 mph). Such a measure would reduce “contact” accidents, provide more road space by eliminating “bunching”, reduce the requirement for new road building by increasing road capacity, and lessen the environmental impact. Moreover, at times of congestion, steady-speed traffic can have a greater mean speed than traffic permitted to operate with higher limits but uncontrolled patterns – a factor proven on a daily basis on our congested (and uncontrolled) motorways. (Such a measure might require selective “crawler lanes” where slow moving traffic is necessarily involved eg farm vehicles, but these would usually be confined to short lengths of road, and could be tackled on a case by case basis.) The uniform speed of traffic would also serve to lower emissions, which (as noted above) are a cause of more fatalities than result from accidents.

- (iii) Monitor the speed of all traffic by means of roadside cameras – penalties for breach of speed limits to increase exponentially for each penalty imposed, and the revenue thus raised to be applied to defraying the cost of enforcement.
- (iv) Recommend the reinstatement of the Harrogate to Northallerton railway, thus providing the opportunity for modal shift by a significant proportion of long-range and commuter traffic (including Ripon/Harrogate); relieving the appropriate section of the East Coast Mainline; and re-opening the former ‘Queen of Scots’ route (Harrogate-Northallerton), and thereby re-instating direct travel from Leeds and the Midlands to the Northeast and Edinburgh without having to use the detour via York.

Modal transfer

Following the issue of the Final Report I was actually sitting as a member of the Robust Infrastructure Commission when this item came before it. This enabled me to highlight a discrepancy in the way the issue of the possibility of modal transfer between road and rail in the event of reinstatement of the Harrogate to Northallerton railway had been treated during the course of the study. At the first meeting of the Steering Group I raised the issue of the probable future reinstatement of the Harrogate to Northallerton railway line – and was told by the Chairman (Dave Merritt) that since this was a roads-based study then consideration of modal transfer was not within its remit. However, at the first meeting of the Steering Group the Chairman (John Jarvis) had stated quite

continued overleaf

SY tram network carries 50 millionth passenger

South Yorkshire's Supertram system has carried its 50 millionth passenger, almost four years after the franchise to operate the system was sold by the Transport Executive to one of the UK's largest public transport organisations, Stagecoach Group plc.

The £240 million, 29km system, with its three colour coded routes, now carries eleven million passengers a year.

South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority Chairman, John Hoare, said: "The development of light rail systems has now found favour in other parts of the country, but in South Yorkshire we already have a Supertram to be proud of and one which is appreciated and well used by visitors and residents alike."

"We have come a long way since the idea of the tram was first mooted and a huge amount has been achieved since the system was launched."

When Stagecoach took over the running of the trams, the company introduced a bright new white livery with orange, red and blue stripes, a new timetable and some integrated ticketing which gave a boost to passenger numbers.

To further encourage car users to use the tram, the Transport Executive has also introduced a series of security controlled Park and Ride sites across the city at tram-stop sites.

The trams run at frequencies of between five and ten minutes in each



direction on routes going from Malin Bridge to Halfway and Middlewood to Meadowhall and at 30-minute frequencies from Herdings Park to Meadowhall, with each route passing through the city centre throughout the majority of the day.

The average weekday patronage is some 38,000 passenger trips, with research showing 16% of these trips – the equivalent of 6,000 – being from former car drivers.

Creation of the system helped South Yorkshire be designated as one of the Government's "Centres of Excellence" in transport integration, a designation re-confirmed earlier this year.

The growth of Supertram

Passengers (millions) carried in each year:

95/96	5.0
96/97	7.8
97/98	9.2
98/99	10.4
99/00	10.9
00/01	11.1

There was a total of 119.8 million passenger journeys on England's six light rail systems in the year 2000/01.

Another M-way continued

unequivocally that modal transfer was in fact an issue that could be taken into consideration. I have raised this with various appropriate people but it has not been considered as worthy of any form of follow up

What happens next? The Study having been completed and the Final Report issued, we await the decision of Government. However, in early-November, Jim received a letter from Jim Jarvis which said, in large part: "Following a period of consultation on the options, the Regional Planning Body, the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, has indicated support for the motorway option.

The study focused on safety issues and in putting forward the motorway option the consultants acknowledged that there were limitations to their justification for upgrading the A1 to motorway standard at a total cost of some £250 million in today's prices based on safety measures alone. We have therefore now asked the Highways Agency to undertake further detailed economic analysis of the motorway option and at the same time ensure that the environmental analysis fully meets current standards.

We expect this additional work to be completed around the end of the calendar year. We will discuss the findings of this work with the steering group for the original safety study before Ministers make decisions about the way forward for this important transport corridor.

Trans-Pennine railways – the region deserves only the very best

Steve Broadbent reviews some issues

Since writing this column for the previous 'Focus' three months ago, a great deal has happened on our beleaguered railways. The collapse of Railtrack and Arriva Trains' driver shortages, national headlines on an almost daily basis, are but two examples. On the former it seems the general consensus is 'right decision but a little late in coming, and the big questions are how long Railtrack will be in administration, what ill-effects with there be in this period and what happens after that? We all want "a railway fit for the 21st century" to use Stephen Byers' words, but that will cost.

On the latter issue, let me again state my view that the major part of the problems are not of Arriva's making, nor could the company have reasonably avoided the present situation, and therefore to pillory and fine it is unfair, but I appreciate someone has to be the whipping boy. The fault lies almost entirely with "the system" as laid down by the various governments who pursued privatisation and made the rules and laws, and therefore ultimately largely with the SRA itself. Other train operators have similar staff and stock shortages, it is just that Arriva's are perhaps worse because of the state of the operation it bought in early-2000, and the ludicrous length of its franchise - initially just one year, then extended by a further two with an optional break point in April 2002. No business can pan on that kind of short term basis.

However, we must look forward.

House of Commons meeting

Perhaps the most significant activity by YHTAR as a group this past quarter was when a group of five campaigners, five local MPs and Derek Smallwood, Chairman of the Transpennine Rail Group, met with three senior SRA officials in a House of Commons meeting room in October to discuss the Trans-Pennine Express (TPE) franchise. The meeting is reported in

my 10-page Briefing Note (sent to all relevant MPs, for example, as well as the new SRA chairman, Richard Bowker): here is a summary of the key issues as I see them.

An MP asked how long the new TPE franchise would be let for. The SRA's thinking was still very woolly: it would be for, well "to give time for investment in new rolling stock, 7 or 10 or 12 years might be a reasonable basis". The present plan is that, following the PTAs' input in November, the specification will be issued in early-2002 and final bids will be required in the spring so that a preferred bidder can be announced in the summer. After legal negotiations, the franchise could then formally start when the ATN franchise expires in February 2003 – but that would be fast wrok by recent standards.

There would be "no infrastructure investment in the first phase" - understood to mean to 2008/9. But "development work would continue on infrastructure enhancements until such time as resources are available." ('Infrastructure' is broadly the part of the railway owned and/or maintained by Railtrack.)

No frequency increases

Without infrastructure developments there can be no meaningful increases in service frequency or routes to cater for growth in demand or passengers' expectations.

The SRA said that "franchisee investment can go ahead straight away, but infrastructure improvements are secondary aspirations".

Two of the three earlier bids – Connex and First/GoVia – had concentrated Manchester services on Victoria station, on the understanding that major infrastructure enhancements in the centre of that city would proceed fairly quickly – the total package of proposals is estimated at £1.5 billion. This is now off the agenda

for the foreseeable future (although development work is again continuing until funds are identified), so the "new" bids will need to concentrate on routing via Manchester Piccadilly, at which extra paths for TPE trains will be almost impossible to acquire (given, in particular, the extra services being operated by Virgin - Cross Country from 2002 and to/from London from 2003), meaning, in effect, there can be no extra TPE trains through Manchester this side of 2008/9.

No to Woodhead

One previous bid had also raised the possibility of re-opening the Sheffield-Manchester route via the closed Woodhead tunnel, an aspiration also of the South Yorkshire PTA. This idea, too, was no longer appropriate, said the SRA, due to both the lack of funds and the limited number of trains which (it says) could use the route due to pathing constraints at the approaches to Manchester.

Discussion at the meeting considered what stock might be used on the TPE, for the original concept was that they would be of the latest and best inter-city style units, whereas now, with the maxim that bids should offer "best value" clearly bidders' costs could be reduced by including "pre-owned" or cascaded stock rather than specifying new. (Readers will be aware that the French have two words for new - neuf and nouveau – when the SRA says 'new trains' it does not necessarily mean 'des trains neufs'.) And in any case there is little likelihood of "nouveau" trains being available, either.

The major concern of all those round the table, except the SRA delegates, was the illogicality of having two franchises - TPE and Northern - in the north of England. This is a complex issue, perhaps for another time, but YHTAR, along with MPs and all others wishing to see the best possible railways, firmly believes that, in the

present circumstances, one single north of England franchise is the only sensible solution, and calls on the SRA to find a way of developing its policies to this end. Among the worrying outcomes of this policy is that from February 2003 (if not sooner) to 2004/2005 (when Northern is let) there will be THREE franchises in the north - FNW, ATN and TPE, meaning even more drivers, trains and management will be needed than now.

In pursuing a policy of having two rail franchises in the north of England, the SRA is alone: politicians, officials, rail user groups and rail campaigners have all voiced their opposition.

YHTAR urges that:

1/ a way should be found for the SRA and Stephen Byers to halt the present process without loss of political face. They should admit the policy is no longer tenable.

2/ ATN and FNW should be permitted to place orders for brand new trains now, underwritten by the SRA, to provide better Trans Pennine services as soon as possible, as well as solving the acute train shortage there is at the local level.

3/ The government should realise that high-quality rail services are just as necessary, if not more so, in the north as elsewhere in the country and, by releasing more funds for their development between now and 2010, invest in the region by progressing the type of vision laid out by Sir Alastair Morton (outgoing SRA chairman) in 2000 when he launched the original TPE bidding process.

In summary, the future rail services in the Yorkshire and the Humber region in particular, and in the north of England in general, should be the best that available funding will permit: the present process is leading us away from that target.

TR&IN conference – “Regional Railways 2001”

This first-class TR&IN conference held at the York Railway Museum in mid-November. Among a truly excellent panel of speakers from all over the country, two stood out. **Allan Dare, Business Development Manager for Chiltern Trains** (London-Birmingham via Aylesbury, etc.) gave a very inspiring talk about his franchise, which has itself invested in a highly successful brand new station at Warwick Parkway (which the idiotic regulations effectively preclude other operators using. How daft can the railways get, someone is being paid a huge salary to impose and defend such lunacy!?). Chiltern has introduced a fleet of brand new trains and has also paid for single-line track to be doubled, among other major improvements, which investments have seen passenger numbers soar and Marylebone go from imminent closure to bustling commuter station in a very short time.

Chiltern is about to sign for a new 20-year franchise, and it offers a level of service, innovation, investment and, above all, stability which we will NEVER see in the north. You might like to ask your MP why not.

Ruth Annison, representing both the **Settle-Carlisle Railway Business Liaison Group** and the **Wensleydale Railway** gave another inspiring, and very humorous, talk on

the need for better rail services on those two axes, especially in the wake of foot and mouth. Ruth also stressed the need for commitment to the lines from the local and national authorities, better marketing and interchange facilities, and for timetables which allowed for easier commuting as well as usage by tourists. It was amazing to hear how little commitment there is to the S+C from local councils and bodies like the National Park, who surely should be leading calls for the line's development. The line has huge potential to provide wider economic benefits along its corridor, says Ruth, without considering the more obvious tourist aspects.

With the S+C not now being an allowable part of the TPE franchise, as of course it ought to be, rumours of further cut backs and even closure are again rife, just at a time when for all sorts of reasons (not least of which is the need for a coherent post-FMD recovery programme with proper investment) the actuality ought to be more, better and better-promoted trains.

Skipton-Colne feasibility study

Finally, my own Trans-Pennine campaign, to re-open the Skipton-Colne route (SELRAP) has passed its first milestone with the publishing of a preliminary feasibility study. Two independent bodies have looked at the task and have both indicated a cost of £28 million to install a full-standard heavy rail double track line. Not a lot compared with, say, the £78 million being spent on the Bingley by-pass or in the restoration of a Scottish canal. This will be a long fight, but the trackbed, threatened by what is one of the last links in an Preston-West Riding high speed road (M65/A650), is far too valuable a national resource to concrete over, 30+ years after the railway was closed.

SELRAP's first public meeting is to be held in Colne on February 1 – full details from me.

Excellent Trans-Pennine rail services are crucial to the economic well-being of the whole of the north of England. We are currently on track for only second and third rate routes, a policy (in contrast to the service provided under the Chiltern franchise) which is as short sighted and ill-informed as any! Perhaps someone could explain lucidly why the north cannot have at least the same deal - it actually deserves better.

There is one ray of hope: the new SRA chairman, Richard Bowker, is from Blackburn and proud of his northern roots. He is also admired at high level throughout the industry for his strategic thinking. He might just see the folly of the present policy and convince Stephen Byers to stop it, before it is too late, and put Y+H first equal with the other regions, Scotland and Wales, when it comes to rail investment.

Closing thought – the head of the Ernst & Young Railtrack administration team is said to charge £450 PER HOUR. I would be happy to receive job offers around one-twentieth of that!!

(Copies of the Skipton-Colne report and my Trans-Pennine meeting report can be had from me: a small donation to YHTAR funds to cover copying and postage would be appreciated. TR&IN can be contacted on 01484 549737 - Steve Broadbent.)

How the Swiss do it

– run the railways, that is. Ray Wilkes represented YHTAR at the Transport 2000 Platform meeting in London in September, when the key speaker was Peter Grossenbacher of Swiss Railways. Here are Ray's notes on that talk.

The talk was given in faltering ironical English: I read into it a degree of contempt for the UK's rail industry structure.

Rail is the core transport product. Swiss Railways (SBB, the country's largest train operator) has rail passenger, freight and infrastructure divisions, and vertical integration is important. There are 2902 kilometres of track, 28,000 staff, 740 stations, and annually 130 million passenger kilometres, 287 million passenger trips, 60 million tonnes goods. Revenue: goods 1081 million, passenger 18 million. Group profit 146 million (Swiss Francs)

Competition – mainly road, some railway competition.
Management triangle. Co-operation conditions.

The key is customer needs. Performance equals satisfied customer needs. Need to know customer needs – use long-term market research.

Customer needs include punctuality, clean and friendly environment, direct and frequent services. Price is not important (the price is always too high, unless it is free!).

Vertical integration. Rolling stock is useless without track, track is useless without rolling stock, both are subservient to customer needs.

There are 50-100 rail and bus competitors in Switzerland, but vertical integration. One Timetable: one ticketing system.

Rolling stock-deployment – cleaning, maintenance, development.

Infrastructure-maintenance, construction, development – construction is sub-contracted but planned by Swiss Railways.

Timetable/offer-planning – implementing, adjusting, and development. On top of Triangle.

Integration, not fragmented, railway, Swiss Railways

is part of the system. The whole thing needs to be in profit, but individual bits do not matter, so long as the whole system is in profit.

Planning horizons:

Short-term: small adjustments to timetable.

4-5 years: new trains, small track improvements, better timetable.

Long-term: tilting trains, double track, signals, higher speeds integrated timetable.

Optimum safety and reliability-operation. Individual train-operating companies will operate to support customer needs.

Staff: the most important part of the system, human beings for human beings not just shareholders. Chance for staff to commit themselves, entrepreneurial. Stability. The last strike was in 1917 and strikes banned. There is a staff shortage, but staff will work extra because they're committed to the customer. They vent their anger with management, which is unpopular, by writing to politicians and the newspapers.

The question was asked about market share. Interestingly, Grossenbacher said when considering market share journeys under 3k should be ignored as rail could not compete. On journeys over three kilometres, SBB has a 28 per cent market share.

Common goals, operation, dedicated staff, stable political and financial prospects, long-term. Swiss railway companies tended to be owned jointly by the local authorities (Cantons) and the state, with some private shareholding. The shareholders get nice meals at the annual general meeting and not much else!

This is a very different system to the UK. Could it work here? The Swiss have very different politics and ethos than have we....

Bradford rail users & Cross-city rail link

A Public Meeting, held at City Hall, Bradford (BCH) on 26 October, agreed that a Bradford Rail Users' Group should be established, and that a sub-group should be formed to examine the Cross-Bradford Strategic Link (CBSL).

A further meeting was held at Shipley Town Hall on 20 November to discuss the CBSL – a railway to link the Forster Square and Interchange stations. It was agreed that both heavy and light rail links should be considered, but,

generally heavy rail was thought more suitable as it would allow a north-south cross-city link to provide far better local and long distance rail services to and through Bradford.

The next meeting of the BRUG will be held on Tuesday 11 December 2001 at 19.30 in Committee Room 4 of BCH to discuss rail links to the city. The CBSL sub-group meets on 10 January 2002 at 19.30 in BCH Committee Room 5.

Membership – join now!!

We are inviting everyone who supports our aims to join YHTAR: by so doing, you will be supporting the broad aims of all the pro-public transport pressure groups in the region, and you will be contributing to the growing debate about, and pressure for, better “sustainable transport”.

Paid-up members will receive four issues of this newsletter a year, regular updates from me (wherever possible by e-mail to keep our costs down) and will be able to attend and vote at General Meetings as appropriate.

For the present year all subscriptions have been set at just £5.00, which, we hope, will encourage those from larger organisations to offer a donation to YHTAR’s funds!! As the subscription year ends at the AGM in April, at which time the rate may (or may not!!) be varied, if anyone wishes to join now may I suggest that a

YHTAR Committee 2001/2

Chairman:	Colin Speakman (Ilkley; Transport 2000)
Vice Chairlady:	Pam Ashton (Bradford; Cyclists’ Touring Club)
Treasurer:	Graham Collett (York; Railfuture)
Committee Members:	Jim Burton (Ilkley; CPRE)
	Anthony Rae (Hebden Bridge; FoE)
	Brian Witty (Hull; CPRE, CTC and T2000)
	Peter Davies (Brighouse; Railfuture)

donation to funds would be more appropriate than a fee, with your formal membership starting at the AGM – please contact me (Steve Broadbent) at the address below.

YHTAR really does need your support – only by being a large and very active umbrella group will we taken seriously by councils, NGOs and government bodies and representatives.

To subscribe to the YHTAR e-mail forum, send a message to majordomo@foe.co.uk with *subscribe yorkshumb_transport <your email address>* in the message body – this remains FREE and open to all.

...and the YHTAR web site is www.yhtar.org.uk

where you will find our newsletters, minutes and a great many links .

Transport 2000 West Yorkshire Branch, which now distributes this newsletter to its many members, is planning the following meetings, to be held in the Methodist Chapel, Oxford Street, Leeds (next to the Town Hall).

Trans-Pennine Rail Franchise

The ‘Platform’ section of Transport 2000 is arranging a **Trans-Pennine Forum** in central Manchester on Thursday, 24 January 2002. This will be co-hosted by the RPC / Platform / GMPTE and funded by GMPTE. Speakers will include a Minister, PTEG, non-PTE local authority, RPC, Jonathan Bray of T2000, Paul Salvesson of TR&IN and a speaker from a TAR.... Full details from Jonathan, Tel: 020 7613 0743 ext.115 e-mail: jonathan@transport2000.demon.co.uk,

Diary Dates

February (*date to be advised*): Leeds. Supertram presentation by a member of the project team.

Monday 8 April: AGM.

Spring (*provisional*): "Traffic Free Tourism" by Jean Hunter at Harewood House.

Further details from Ian Davies, Secretary,
e-mail: daviesi@aol.com
Tel: 01274 666963 (evening, home)

In addition the **T2000WY Bus Group** next meets at 11.00 on Saturday 19 January in the bar of the Golden Lion Pub, Swinegate, Leeds, and the **T2000WY Rail Group** meets Mondays 28 January and 25 March at 19.15 in the Grove Inn, (just over Victoria Bridge immediately south of Leeds rail station).

Next YHTAR meetings

Our next **General Meeting** will be held in the Railway Institute, York, at **2pm on Saturday, January 5, 2002**. This will be an opportunity to exchange information about campaigning and to find out what is going on!

Our second **Annual General Meeting** is provisionally scheduled for **Saturday, April 13, 2002**: full details nearer the time.

The next **YHTAR Focus** will be published in mid-March, all contributions welcome! The deadline is the last week in February 2002.

YHTAR Focus is edited and designed by the YHTAR Co-ordinator, Steve Broadbent, 35 Bromley Road, Bingley, BD16 4DA, West Yorkshire. Tel/Fax: 01274 569280. e-mail: steve@yhtar.org.uk