

YHTAR Focus

Newsletter of the
Yorkshire and The Humber
Transport Activists' Roundtable

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So where *is* the silver lining...?

by YHTAR's chairman,
Colin Speakman

Turning up at Leeds station to find a bus instead of an evening train on the Wharfedale Line for the second occasion the other week, an awful truth dawned. This was nothing to do with a) shortage of rolling stock b) Leeds First station rebuilding c) floods, d) Hatfield e) driver shortages f) strikes g) train failures h) signal failures, nor any of the dozen familiar excuses which are handed out week by week. But even if it had been any of these things, nobody even bothered to tell us. And no one even bothered to ask. About 30 miserable, fed-up people standing around for a (possible) coach, 23.15 at night, tired and wanting to get home.

This is how things are in Britain, 2002; the sheer, awful incompetence of our public transport services and lack of basic customer care yet again, something which now seems ingrained in our culture at every level, from the childish public spats at what used to be the Department of Transport, to train and bus operators incapable of running an advertised service that we, as taxpayers and fare payers, are paying for.

The Transport White Paper and the Ten Year Transport Plan suddenly seem like a distant dream, with, according to the SRA's Strategic Plan, little or no new rail investment planned for our region. Supertram, the one bright light, will eventually benefit one of our cities, but only

after several years of major physical disruption to the road network, during which time, predictably, bus passengers will suffer most acutely of all.

Nor will it have escaped the attention of transport activists and groups throughout our region that road building is back on our agenda with a vengeance, pushed quite hard by the same unreconstructed highway engineers that still command senior positions in the Highways Agency and local authorities Highways Departments – sometimes now misnamed “Environment” with Orwellian New-Speak. The new Regional Assembly, urged along by the road lobby, seems to be pursuing the old Roads for Prosperity Agenda, and is likely to throw its weight and influence behind proposals for yet more huge road schemes in Yorkshire and the Humber. Multi-Modal Studies seem destined to be tokenism at best – especially if there is no rail investment – for walking, cycling or public transport, with yet more tarmac, more congestion, more pollution in

continued overleaf

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YHTAR Seminar
York – April 13
see page 11!!

Silver Lining? – continued

the pipeline, more out of town retail parks and car-served leisure complexes.

Of course, and just as predictably, as soon as the first major new road schemes are on the drawing board, when lines are drawn on the maps through the leafy suburbs and surviving bits of countryside, there will be outcry and backlash from Middle England, from the very same people who are now demanding more and better roads. Watch how quickly the Bingley bypass becomes the Saltaire grid lock from which will develop the next appalling road proposal.

Meanwhile, in the real world, carbon emissions and global warming accelerate with mild winter storms, more floods, and some scientists now predicting world catastrophe within decades. Fuelled by mass advertising campaigns, Britain is now the most car-reliant country in Europe. Proof of direct links between traffic pollution and respiratory disease and asthma is now established.

So it's not exactly easy being a transport optimist in 2002. But there are a few good things happening, like the countryside finally opening up after Foot and Mouth, like more rural buses, a few new trains – and Moorsbus, one of

Britain's best integrated transport networks in a National Park.

On Saturday April 13 in York, YHTAR is holding a Seminar on the theme of **Rural Transport - can it be Sustainable?** with top speakers from the Countryside Agency, the Wolds Rural Transport Partnership and the North York Moors National Park. Come and join us and find out more about what promises to be a fascinating half day – with our AGM to follow in the afternoon. The seminar fee of only £8 includes lunch – full details on page 11. We look forward to meeting you in York Guildhall at 10am.

Questions from Finningley

The (Doncaster) Finningley Airport public inquiry has now ended; what did Anthony Rae, who represented FOE, learn from the experience?

As I write, the closing submissions are being made, and the Inquiry will end in mid-March. It takes a great deal of effort for voluntary sector organisations, with almost no resources, to participate in this process, so the first question is: was it worth it?

A senior civil servant confided in me about the amount of lobbying received from MPs against holding the inquiry at all, so having forced one to be held and seen it through to the end is a victory in itself. Both cases, for and against another international airport in our region, have now been heard before an impartial inspector. An important issue at an Inquiry is: what is the support in policy for a development? And it has been interesting to reveal just how little support there is in practice

Another crucial issue is: has the need for a new airport been demonstrated? Some two years ago the government's Northern Air Services study – which looked exhaustively at this topic – was

completed; after co-ordination with the other regional studies, it will finally be published in May. And yet, all of this comprehensive and impartial, public sector forecasting information was withheld from the Inquiry by DTLR, who said it was 'confidential'.

Instead, the question of 'need' was fought over by the opposing commercial airport groups – Peel (the applicant), which owns Liverpool and wants to expand to the east side of the country; opposed by Manchester (now also owners of Humberside and East Midlands – in a consortium with LeedsBradford) – like two ferrets in a sack. With obvious in-built conflicts of interest, is this the way that evidence should be presented to an airport Inquiry?

However, their battle did provide the odd moment of theatre. The best was when Peel revealed that Manchester themselves had expressed an interest a few years ago to develop Finningley as an even larger airport than Peel were now proposing! On the other hand, the Peel evidence kept changing, and was shot through with inconsistencies.

This is consistent with the thrust of government policy which, standing

sustainability on its head, favours 'regional development via airport growth' whilst effectively abandoning – in the shape of the Strategic Rail Authority's new Strategic Plan – the opportunity for 'regional development via railway investment'. Does that make sense?

In cross-examination, FOE demonstrated that the airport would generate huge amounts of traffic, day and night, on a totally inadequate local road network; these factors can prove to be the Achilles Heel of a development like this. But if, as the planning Green Paper is now advocating, public inquiries are abandoned in favour of an initial parliamentary approval (and I wonder which way that would have gone?! – see above), would all the deficiencies of an airport application, which has permanent and serious impacts, have been revealed?

This is a matter of some significance because 2002, as well as seeing the planning green paper, will also see a new aviation White Paper, paving the way for HUGE air travel and airports growth over the next 30 years. If Finningley was something of a struggle, the forthcoming battle over aviation will be fierce indeed.

A66 dualling decision ignores the facts, and regional safety priorities

Anthony Rae, the Y&HTAR's representative on the A66 Safety Study steering group, reports.

The latest chapter in the saga of the controversial plans to dual the A66, running between Penrith and Scotch Corner, has seen the conclusions of the government's recently-published Safety Study for the road questioned by independent safety experts, and the unusual sight of the environmental transport organisations represented in the TAR and the AA on the same side of the argument!

Despite being studied for over 18 months, the argument over whether the A66 – identified at the start in the *Trunk Road Review* as having a 'poor safety record' – is unsafe or not is still raging. In fact, the Study concluded that the general accident rate of the A66 is 30% below the national average. There is just one category of accidents (fatal accidents on single carriageway sections of the road) where the accident rate is above the average.

Nonetheless, the Robust Infrastructure Commission of the Yorkshire & the Humber Regional Assembly on 4 March approved recommendations to proceed towards dualling the entire length of the road (at a cost of £70m), and to accelerate construction of all the proposed dual sections in the Y&H region. This recommendation has been opposed by the TAR who say that low cost safety measures should be implemented (at a cost of £3.7m) and monitored first. (Dualling the road will also threaten many UK and European-status environment and heritage sites).

Our views are supported by independent safety experts. The Transport Research Laboratory, called in by one of the government's nature conservation agencies, and Professor Richard Allsop, one of Europe's leading road safety experts, have separately concluded that "the need for safety measures is no more urgent on the A66 than on normal built-up 'A' roads nationally", and that "it is the occurrence of fatal accidents on single carriageway sections of the route that should form the primary issue of the study (and these should have been targeted)... This has not been the case".

Professor Allsop, commenting on the prioritisation of the dualling scheme, also said that "to divert resources from already seriously underfunded programmes of small scale safety measures in order to accelerate dualling schemes on the A66 would be a serious exacerbation of an already clear misallocation of resources."

At the RIC meeting, where I was able to present the TAR argument, I also referred to an important new analysis of safety on the country's 'A' roads published last week by the AA. This also shows that the A66 has an average or below average accident record; that it ranks 309 and 592 in the national accident league table; and that there are hundreds of miles of 'A' roads in Yorkshire & the Humber with accident rates double or higher than the A66.

This survey shows that spending very large amounts of money on 'improving safety' on the A66 by dualling it cannot represent a regional priority. The AA has estimated that often simple improvements to those stretches of UK 'A' roads that perform worse than average could save 2,400 people in Britain from death or serious injury each year. This is equivalent to more than a third of the fatal and serious accidents that happen on these roads.

So, there are important questions for the Regional Assembly to answer:

- Why do they support spending £70m of scarce transport investment on dualling a road which doesn't generally have a poor accident record to begin with, and whose safety could be substantially improved for just 5% of that amount?
- Why hasn't the Regional Assembly prioritised scarce safety or transport investment expenditure towards our region's real safety priorities? 'A' roads with an accident record far worse than the A66; urban roads where children and the vulnerable are in much greater danger; or to improve underfunded public transport?

Via our national organisations, we will need to draw the attention of DTLR, and the Treasury, to this lack of concern for regional safety priorities and value for money.

YHTAR Seminar and AGM

**Saturday April 13,
Guildhall, York**

see pages 11 & 12!!

Bus Station developments at Keighley and Harrogate

After a national trend of closing bus stations, particularly in the years since deregulation in 1986, it is refreshing to see developments which 'buck the trend' in Yorkshire.

The new bus station at Keighley, on the site of one dating from 1940 and closed in 2001, opened on 10 February. Totally enclosed and containing many facilities to make bus travel more attractive, the new station has been funded by Metro in partnership with Keighley & District Travel, the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Yorkshire Forward, and other parties.

Metro has produced an attractive A5 folder entitled "Your 21st Century Keighley Bus Station has arrived!", containing details of facilities available, a layout plan and list of routes and departure stands.

At Harrogate, work is taking place to revamp the bus station. This was originally closed in 1991 and the site sold for redevelopment, with the result that bus stops were spread throughout the town's convoluted oneway system and a subsequent loss of passenger traffic. After two changes of ownership of the site and in the absence of any development, finally, in 1995 Blazefield Holdings, owners of the main local bus operator, Harrogate & District Travel, leased part of the site for use by some services on a 'temporary' basis pending further progress.

Six years on and with still no sign of development by the site owners Scottish Widows, Blazefield took the bold step of re-acquiring the site with the aim to make it a permanent bus station: a move which has the full backing and support of both North Yorkshire County Council and Harrogate Borough Council.

Work in progress includes new, partially enclosed waiting shelters of a design which will blend with other buildings in the town, more seats under cover, passenger information displays and a new information kiosk. On completion of work in June, passengers will find major improvements over the previous temporary arrangements. And it is hoped that the



One of Harrogate & District's smart and ultra-modern buses leaves the presnet Harrogate bus station, itself a great improvemt on the previous arrangements, on a service to Bradford. To the right of this picture, a brand new bus station is being built by Blazefield Holdings (owners of H&D).
(Courtesy Blazefield Holdings)

growth in bus patronage will continue to rise. Two particular areas of expansion have been on service 36, Leeds – Harrogate – Ripon, where frequencies have been improved on weekdays and Sundays, and on the Harrogate – Knaresborough route, where usage of the ten minute daytime service has necessitated the recent introduction of larger vehicles. A new development here is the extension of the Sunday service, increased from a 30 to 20 minute service two years ago, into Carmires and Eastfield areas of Knaresborough, hitherto served on weekdays only.

Harrogate & Districts' success in developing its business arises, to a great extent, from the high standards set by way of clean and wellmaintained, comfortable vehicles, in common with other members of the group. In my own experience, Blazefield vehicles usually stand out from the crowd.

Alan Sutcliffe

Dalesbus services Summer 2002

Dalesbus services this summer will be similar to those of 2001. However, there is one change this year, in that the Keighley & District service 807 Skipton to Richmond will now start from and return to Keighley Bus Station, calling at the Rail Station to enable a train connection to Leeds and Shipley.

The 807 operates on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays from Easter to the end of October and affords a stay of almost

seven hours in Hawes, five in Reeth or four in Richmond.

Following a recent discussion with Paul Andrews, the Harrogate Rural Locality Transport Partnership Office, it is hoped to secure funding for an all year Sunday bus service between Harrogate and Pateley Bridge after a lapse of several years. Subject to successful negotiations and tendering, the aim is to introduce the service from the Golden Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend. Watch this space!

Yellow School Buses in service

Yellow School Buses started delivering pupils to some West Yorkshire schools after the February half-term (*see picture in the previous 'Focus'*).

What you might not be aware of is that this pilot project is part of a county-wide Metro initiative to reduce road congestion – in the short-term by offering a safe alternative to the car, and in the long-term by developing tomorrow's generation of bus users.

A brief summary of Metro's (the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive) aims on the project is set out below, with thanks to Martin Driver

Metro works with local authorities, transport operators and other agencies to develop public transport in West Yorkshire which will benefit passengers and also reduce traffic congestion and all the social, environmental and economic costs which go with it.

When we started work on the concept of delivering safe transport to schools and began discussing it with bus operator First, we were delighted to learn that they had plans to import some yellow buses from America. These were the perfect vehicle (pun intended) to launch this project

The yellow bus project has been

made possible by the hard work of our partners First, the Countryside Agency, Calderdale Council and the Countryside Agency. Metro is keen to pursue safe transport to school across the county using whatever methods, vehicles and partners are effective in other areas.

Another example is SAFEmark awards, currently being developed with schools and colleges in the area, where schools and pupils draw up their own codes of conduct, clarifying responsibilities, and integrating home-to-school transport issues into school activities. In return, bus operators commit to providing regular drivers who have been on customer care courses which include special sessions on transporting young people.

Statistics state that the school run is responsible for 1 in 5 cars on the road at peak times and in areas where narrow, steep roads with poor footpaths rule out the option of walking or cycling, the figure may be higher.

While these areas are served by regular public transport services Metro understands that some parents may be reluctant to wave their children off to school on a bus which may be boarded by any paying member of the public.

Consequently, the majority of children are driven to school, resulting in congested and dangerous roads, as well as the wider impact upon the environment.

By developing dedicated schools services, on safe vehicles, with regular, trained drivers, Metro wants to give parents the confidence to let their children bus to school. Whether the buses are imported and yellow is not important as long as they are safe vehicles operating dedicated services.

Successfully developing these types of services across West Yorkshire will help Metro to lure significant numbers of cars off West Yorkshire's roads.

More young people getting used to bus travel from an early age will also help to generate the bus users of tomorrow. Metro realises that greater awareness of public transport and its active promotion to young people is vital. Providing enjoyable services will encourage them to see public transport as a viable alternative when they move on from school to college or work.

The long term result of this will again be less reliance up on the car and therefore less congestion.

Tourism without traffic

Green travel to Harewood

Over the past two years, Transport 2000 West Yorkshire Group, in conjunction with the Harewood House Trust, have been developing a Visitor Travel Plan in an effort to promote visitors but reduce traffic to Harewood.

This follows on from improvements to the frequency of bus services. These are: No.36, Leeds – Harewood – Harrogate – Ripon (daytime frequencies now every 20 minutes on weekdays, half-hourly on Sundays), and the introduction of service No.923, which operates on Thursdays, Fridays,

Saturdays and Summer Sundays between Wetherby – Harewood – Otley, with an extension to Ilkley on Summer Sundays. A six-seater buggy is available at Harewood Gates to convey visitors to the House.

The added bonus is that visitors who present their bus ticket on admission, gain entry for half price! This offer has already increased the level of visitors considerably amount.

In order to see the plan in action Transport 2000, in conjunction with

the Yorkshire Dales Society, have arranged a visit to Harewood House on Saturday 11 May. The meeting starts at Harewood House Gates at 11.00. Bus 36 at 10.35 from Leeds City Bus Station, 10.05 from Ripon, 10.40 from Harrogate; or bus 923 from Menston Rail Station at 10.23, 10.33 from Otley.

There will be a short talk on the plan by Jean Hunter, Head of Marketing, Harewood House Trust, after which participants will be free to enjoy the delights of the House and Grounds.

Alan Sutcliffe

Media responsibility and transport issues

Transport has a very important and beneficial impact on our lives, our health and our economic prosperity. However, transport is also responsible for over ten deaths and over 100 serious injuries every day, the majority due to road transport. Even at the height of the troubles in Northern Ireland, more people were killed and injured by road traffic accidents than by the troubles themselves. Because of the terrible events in Northern Ireland we expected our press to be responsible in their reportage. Should we expect a similar level of responsibility in transport reporting?

Deaths and injuries on the road cause a massive level of suffering and serious economic problems for the Health Service and the Social Security system. Road accidents are given very little coverage in the press. Almost no coverage is given to the causes of accidents. The majority of accidents are caused by poor driving standards, with a minority caused by poor vehicle maintenance.

Just after the Hatfield rail accident, a lorry on the A1 near Dishforth killed six people. A little later, a lorry demolished a (fortunately empty) bus shelter in the Bradford area. On neither occasion did the press raise the issue of lorry maintenance standards or the training standards of lorry-drivers.

A local bus company, Keighley & District, trains its drivers to the Institute of Advanced Motoring standard. One would think that this excellent example would be espoused by the local press and that they would campaign for all commercial vehicles, lorries, taxis, white vans, travelling salesman and commercial travellers to be trained to the same standard, as it would massively reduce the rate of accidents in our society. However, the press hardly notices.

One would hope that the media would want to support their community in protecting them from traffic danger. One would hope that they were concerned that some parents will be grieving for the loss of their pride and joy killed on the walk

home from school. Or that other parents may be grieving because grandmother was killed on her way to do the babysitting. Somebody else maybe grieving because the loved partner and breadwinner was killed on his or her journey to work. Not occasionally – every day, ten families.

The media report these events as though there were accidents. They are not accidents; they are bad driving and unsuitable attitudes to driving. Up to the age of 18 years people's brains are not sufficiently developed to fully cope with traffic problems. From the age of 40 eyesight and hearing deteriorate in many people and they also cannot cope. Even an able-bodied person with all their faculties intact cannot cope with the situation where most people are driving badly. The media should be stressing the drivers responsibility; not merely pass the test and hope for the best, but to get trained to very high standards.

One might imagine that a newspaper editor or transport journalist could get a great deal of satisfaction from a successful campaign to reduce road accidents and injuries. Apparently, not so.

What they do notice is anything that goes wrong with public transport. As traffic campaigners, we would want them to report things that were wrong with public transport. However, we do not want wild exaggeration or inaccuracy. When describing public transport, the press does not seem to think the normal standards of journalism need apply. Better to be a drug baron than a manager of Railtrack! Quite often the local paper will "slag off" buses or trains simply to fill up some space. Radio, and TV are quite happy to put out inaccurate information about public transport and do not see any need to issue corrections when errors are pointed out.

It is not as though there are no victims of this process or that the only victims are the transport companies. Transport companies and now a major part of the capitalist system. Consequently, pension funds, superannuation funds and insurance companies invest in them. We will lose a little if they do not succeed.

Much more importantly, in so far as people are encouraged to go by car because the alternatives are portrayed as completely horrendous or impossible, people are then encouraged to take a much greater risk of being killed and injured or of killing and injuring somebody else. There is also an economic cost to society. The Leeds shopping centre lost a great deal of business over Christmas 2000, partly due to the genuine problems of travelling by train. But they must have lost more business because the problems were exaggerated. For nearly a week, Ceefax reported no trains at all running out of Leeds when in fact trains were running a near-normal service to Harrogate, Ilkley and Skipton. The *Yorkshire Post* reported Leeds has been "cut off" from the rest of the world when in fact buses were running a very good service.

It is not just the exaggeration of the "rail chaos" or unreliable buses that causes business disruption. Business and commerce are continually disrupted and damaged by traffic congestion. This congestion could be reduced if more people travelled by walking, cycling or public transport. But they are discouraged from doing this by the poor press that public transport gets, and by the reluctance of local authorities to protect cyclists and walkers because the press will always rush to defend the 'freedom of the motorist'.

This "freedom" has become totally dysfunctional, there is no way that a small island with such a high population can have the same freedom that the motorist has in Los Angeles-and even that does not function in the rush-hour and has serious pollution problems!

There is the issue of where our society is going. Britain has to diversify into services and the new economy. The Yorkshire towns used to be sited geographically close to the industry of the day. Coal mines, iron mines, water-powered mills. Now they have to compete in a global economy for service and 'new economy' jobs. Leeds has been very successful in doing this because of its good

Disabled access to Public Transport

The WYPTE opened its third guided busway – in Manchester Road, Bradford (*right*) – earlier this year, and one can only applaud such quality initiatives. But the other photo that accompanied the story (*below*) gives me the opportunity to briefly raise a hobby horse – access to public transport for those with a non-visible ‘challenge’.

Of course, every facility should be given to enable those in wheelchairs to access public transport, but what about the majority of ‘challenged’ people who, if you pass them in the street, you would not realise are not able-bodied – the blind or the deaf, for example?

I have a particular issue with rail stations. If, for example, the departure boards (which, incidentally, I believe are made in Leeds) at Leeds, Bradford and Keighley bus stations are legible for me, and so make using the buses there possible, why do I have severe difficulties with access to Leeds rail station, where I am dependent on the audio announcements? And why is, for example Sheffield rail station so dreadful in



this respect, and why, on a recent visit to that city, was I unable to use the bus station because not only was there no legible departure information, there was no-one on duty to offer guidance? Visit aborted, back to the horrors of the rail station. The same trip took me to Barnsley – brand new bus and rail stations together – wonderful! But no departure information at all that I could use: I had to queue at the ticket counter for information.

Yet York rail station is OK, and Preston is very good – it can be done, and one gets to know where one can and cannot venture, and where, like at Manchester Victoria, the legible information is located (on the footbridge!).

There is a lot of political correctness surrounding disabled access, much of it, sadly, misplaced. If an information display can be specified so that it is illegible to those with seeing difficulties, and if it can be placed so high that even an eagle would have problems reading it, it can just as easily be specified and located so everyone can read it. It only takes thought and consideration, not money and legislation. Railtrack has promised me a legible screen at Leeds, I shall report when it arrives!

Steve Broadbent



rail communications. All Yorkshire towns have an attractive environment: hills, woodlands, parkland and many historic buildings. They should be well placed to attract service industries and new economy industries. They will not do this successfully if the streets are congested, noisy, polluted and dangerous due to traffic.

The local transport plan strategy of encouraging walking, cycling or and public transport takes us in the right direction. Yet the press has been critical of bus lanes and cycle lanes. This does not help the future economic development of the area.

As transport campaigners, although we are very critical about what we think are shortcomings in public transport, we naturally try to be as positive as we can. It would be wrong for the press to be as partisan as we are. But surely we can expect them to be even-handed, and to be responsible about the effect they are having on the rest of society, the economy and the

health of the people who read their papers.

As transport campaigners, we believe that the public transport company should make a much bigger effort to market their products and to encourage the public to use them. This would be done properly involve a lot of advertising in the press. However, to a public transport company it would appear to be a waste of money to advertise in a hostile press. So the press lose out, as does society and the transport companies.

The cynical will think that advertising by the car industry unduly influences the great British Free Press. This is almost certainly mistaken.

The sad fact is that the press has dumbed down so much that they are simply incapable of tackling serious issues. Except maybe the broadsheets. The rest of the media including the local papers can only produce mindless prejudice and is indifferent to the consequences.

Ray Wilkes

Sky Rail – A premium alternative for public transport in Hull

Transport performs a key role in any modern city and Public Transport doubly so. This article presents an overview of proposals for a Public Transport network in Hull, based on the Sky Rail overhead suspended light rail (OSLR) concept.

Before describing the future however, let us consider the current state of Public Transport in Hull. During the fifties, sixties and into the seventies, buses provided Hull with an effective public transport system and the city expanded as a consequence. However, as car ownership and traffic congestion grew the bus lost its position as the preferred option. Deregulation didn't help the situation with bus companies "cherry-picking" the popular routes leaving others with little or no service. The Ferensway Bus Station fell into a long decline – although this will be addressed by the forthcoming St. Stephen's Development.

In recent years, the City Council has actively encouraged bus use with peak time Bus Lanes and "quality bus corridors" but the dominance of the car has diminished little.

So today in Hull we have congested roads and frustrated car drivers who are unwilling to switch to a public transport alternative that is perceived as poor. Car drivers will not be persuaded out of their cars if the choice is to sit in a jam in a bus rather than sit in a jam in their car! Radical ideas are needed to provide a premium public transport service that is better than or at least matches the car in terms of speed, reliability and comfort.

The Government's Ten-Year Plan for Transport, launched by Hull MP John Prescott in 1999, emphasises the need for Public Transport improvements and a modal transfer from the



private car. Local communities, via our political representatives, can suggest the solutions appropriate to their city. In many cases the answer may be improved bus or mainline rail services, other cities have chosen to look again at trams. Each city has its own particular problems so solutions vary from one to another. However, Hull does not have to follow when it can lead!

In the next few years the citizens of Hull could be travelling on the most modern public transport system in the world. Proposals to build an OSLR, developed by Sky Train Corporation of Florida, are being put forward to address Hull's transport problems. A joint venture, Sky Rail UK Ltd., has been formed to promote the technology in this country and the first system could be built in Hull.

The OSLR concept is a train suspended beneath a track 30 feet above the ground. Being elevated, the train does not delay road traffic and does not have to wait for traffic lights or slow moving vehicles. In addition safety is assured as pedestrians, cyclists and cars are kept clear by total grade-separation. At speeds of up to 50 miles per hour passengers will be whisked on a magic carpet ride from Hull's outskirts right into the heart of the city. The speed and convenience of Sky Rail will

Sky Rail in Hull, the concept. ***(courtesy Hull Daily Mail)***

tempt drivers out of their cars, easing congestion and reducing pollution. Existing public transport users will at last have the reliable, clean and comfortable system they deserve.

Beyond the public transport advantages, the benefits of Sky Rail to Hull are widespread. Re-development will be generated at locations near the lines, just as developments followed Hull's trams and trolley buses of a bygone era. Companies will be attracted by modern image of the city that Sky Rail conveys. Tourism will be increased by the new attraction to complement the rest of the city's offerings, *The Deep*, the city's museums and the Community Super Stadium. The city will enter a public transport renaissance with a visionary view that emphasises Hull's pioneering spirit.

To find out more about Sky Rail, you can contact me as below:

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Rail – it isn't all bad news

Railways are always in the headlines, whatever happens it is front page news. If Mr Byers says anything, there it is, lampooned: if a car crashes through a wall and onto the tracks the press goes hysterical, but if half a dozen people are killed in a car-to-car crash it merits barely a mention. A rail operator's parent company makes a profit and it is more hysterical headlines, yet banks or oil companies, for example make billions each year without a blink. "Trains are always late or cancelled" pays little heed to the ever longer journey times for those choosing to drive, nor the harm car exhaust does to our health.

Those without an interest in the railways or unable to pick the wheat from the chaff might be excused for believing the railways are in chaos, are a very dangerous form of transport, and are managed by incompetent, profit-grabbing buffoons.

Nothing, of course could be further from the truth: the British press takes singular delight in crucifying our public services, if it is not the railways it is the NHS or the Post Office, to the detriment of those services, their staff and our environment and well-being.

So, a round up of good railway

news, by way of balance. Most of this is centred around Leeds, for that is the region's rail hub, but most of the effects will be felt elsewhere.

Firstly, the £245 million rebuild of Leeds station is almost complete, and doesn't it look superb? We are indeed very fortunate that this project has gone ahead, and has been completed reasonably close to time and, floods and frost apart, with very little unforeseen disruption. Now the benefits can flow: firstly, there will be five extra GNER services to and six from, London each weekday from June 3 which will be operated by the simply wonderful Regional Eurostar trains! – as well as an extra HST service each way between the capital and Skipton on Saturdays. From the same date there will be a full recovery of the Arriva Trains timetable, with the fourth Leeds-Manchester train in each hour and the Leeds-Glasgow services promised back (although I personally doubt if the latter will operate after the summer timetable ends at the end of September.)

From September 30, many extra Virgin Cross Country services on the axis to the north-east and Birmingham, including a two-hourly service to/from Cardiff and Edinburgh, and trains to/

from Aberdeen. These use the new Bombardier Voyager trains, built and tested in West Yorkshire and a huge but largely unsung (except by Virgin) industry success story. Voyagers started serving Leeds, York and Sheffield in March, and believe me, they are super, if a little cramped, inside.

While talking of Virgin, its Project Omega is thought to be still live: if this goes ahead it could bring a new York-Pontefract-Nottingham-London and Leeds-Stalybridge-Stockport-London services in, say 2005.

The new Trans-Pennine Express (TPE) and Northern franchises should start in spring 2003, and while there will be little change in the short-term, new trains should come to the main routes in 2004/5, meaning better services, (I guess initially between the north east, Leeds and Manchester), but also better trains available to be cascaded to other routes too. TPE will take over those services currently run by Arriva under the 'transpennineexpress' brand (except the Calder Valley route, at least on present plans) and Northern will operate all other Arriva and First North Western services in our region.

continued overleaf



A Class 221 Super Voyager under construction at Bombardier's factory at Horbury, near Wakefield, just before Christmas 2001. The production of these trains, and their introduction into service by Virgin Cross Country has been a rare success story, both for British industry and the railways. While 221s, which tilt, will not be seen in service in Yorkshire, the virtually identical but non-tilting 220s are now serving Leeds, Sheffield and York.
Photo: Steve Broadbent

We should know which companies are to operate these franchises in the summer, and while there is a hot debate raging about the process, we have to look forward to the benefits it will bring rather than look back to any decisions we might not agree with! I have spoken with the bid teams from all three TPE bidders and have found them full of ideas and confidence, and those bidding for Northern see it as a very good opportunity, not a lame duck or “rump” franchise. OK, we are not getting the process nor the investment we would like, but it is not as bad as it might have been. But be prepared for some disruption while the new franchise arrangements bed in, the period of transition, from, say January to summer 2003, could be a difficult time locally.

Also in 2004 comes an hourly Midland Main Line service from Leeds to Sheffield and St Pancras, and an improved service south from Sheffield as well. MML is buying a fleet of new trains, which will bring many more services and seats to this route. Along with the Virgin improvements, there will then be two fast trains an hour between Leeds and Sheffield via Wakefield, for example.

Hull Trains – a private “open access” operator – is about to order new trains, to give its Hull-London service 125mph capability and a higher frequency: the company wants to use the trains displaced by these new ones to start a service from Grimsby and Cleethorpes to King’s Cross, and may, one day, serve Leeds.

The chronic nationwide shortage of diesel trains will be largely overcome by the MML order (which is for 127 carriages in total, 23 trains), with a worthwhile number of older units becoming available for other companies’ use. Although details have yet to be released, that could mean that 2004 will see the end of the “short trains” in the region, and an implementation of the long-standing plans to improve frequencies on the Leeds-Lancaster line. Any order placed by the TPE operator in 2003 can only help with this – as traffic grows so over crowding must be seriously addressed, as well as the increasing demands on railways for socially-orientated services.

Further down the line, other “pluses” are just over the horizon. The future of the east coast franchise (York and Leeds to London Kings Cross, the GNER route), is being debated. The GNER franchise now expires in 2005, so after that there could, indeed should, be brand new stock ordered for this route. The further phases of the east coast upgrade will be getting underway, the first result being a half-hourly Leeds-King’s Cross service throughout the day.

And yes, there is little or nothing in the SRA’s plans for the north, but there are other, smaller scale, means of moving ahead, and when the TPE/Northern franchises are underway we will see a return to Rail Passenger Partnership bids in the region which will doubtless bring many, smaller benefits. A better Leeds-Barnsley-Sheffield service will be among the first.

On the down side, while all the ‘class 333’ electrics which operate between Leeds, Bradford, Ilkley and Skipton are now having an extra 100-seat carriage added to them, and all 16 should be lengthened by the end of the year, there are to be no



Harrogate station, with an Arriva Trains’ diesel train awaiting its next duty. This under-served station could, if campaigner’s wishes come true, one day see services for Ripon, the north and Wensleydale return – but perhaps only if the Strategic Rail Authority relaxes its heavily pro-south policies and encourages investment in northern rails. Photo courtesy Blazefield Holdings

more. It was announced to Parliament last November we were to get five more sets, for use on these lines and also on Leeds-Doncaster, but the SRA has, in fact, denied the WYPTE’s request: we can only hope that, after due negotiation, the announcement made in Hansard prevails, or we will never see enhanced services on the Airedale and Wharfedale corridors as the PTE wants.

Finally, looking even deeper into the crystal ball, we will have Leeds Supertram in 2007, and more lines for Sheffield’s tram system are being discussed. Leeds is already looking to its next phases – east Leeds, the new football ground and the airport are on the list for evaluation, as are other key corridors in the county, while campaigners are pushing for a Cross-Bradford link and the reopening of the Spen Valley route. And again, while it is not what we want it is better than nothing, 2007 will see the opening of the Eurostar terminal at St Pancras and the high speed line from there direct to France. So, a MML train to St Pancras, or a GNER one to King’s Cross and a short walk, will see you on a Eurostar train and in Paris or Brussels perhaps 2-3 hours quicker than it is possible to do it today.

And then, dream when all the trains in the south are brand new, high speed, always on time and big enough not to be crowded, some crumbs might come our way, and some of our campaigns might start to take hold. Of course, the Wensleydale line is about to open in part, but campaigns to reopen Malton-Pickering, Harrogate-Northallerton, and even Menston-Otley-Arthington and Skipton-Colne are moving ahead, not backwards! (A new feasibility report on Malton-Pickering was published in February, and seems to be being viewed favourably.) All these schemes will be given a boost among campaign groups if they are listed as ‘aspirations’ by the bidders for the Northern rail franchise. Certainly the reaction I have had to the Skipton-Colne campaign, which I chair, has been extremely positive, so far!!

Steve Broadbent

Rural Transport – can it be sustainable?

A short seminar organised by the Yorkshire and the Humber Transport Activists Roundtable

The Guildhall, York - Saturday April 13 2002

Programme

0930 – 1000 Coffee and Registration

1000 – 1015 Welcome and Introduction, Colin Speakman, Chairman, T2000 West Yorkshire Group

1015 – 1045 Rural Transport – the role of the Countryside Agency in the Region – Chris Marshall, Lead Officer for Transport, Countryside Agency, YH Regional Office

1045 – 1115 Making it happen in the Wolds – Colin Walker, Humber & Wolds Rural Transport Partnership Officer

1115 – 1145 Questions and Discussion

1145 – 1215 Sustainable travel for National Park visitors – The Moorsbus experience – Bill Breakell, North York Moors National Park Authority

1215 – 1245 Question and Discussion

1245 – 1250 Chairman's Summary and Conclusions

1300 Lunch

There are a limited number of places available at just £8.00 a head to include a high-quality buffet lunch, with a full hour before the AGM to network!! To book, please see below.

Please note that the Seminar precedes our Annual General Meeting, see next page, which starts at 2.00pm in the same location. The £8.00 covers either the Seminar and lunch, or the AGM and lunch – the AGM is, of course, free, but if you are coming to the AGM and want lunch, you must book and pay for it in advance, even if you are not attending the Seminar.

YHTAR Seminar – Booking Details

To book your place at the YHTAR Seminar "Rural Transport, can it be sustainable transport?", please either use the form you will have had from Ray Wilkes by e-mail (if you are on e-mail!), or simply send a cheque for £8.00 per place to:

Steve Broadbent
Co-ordinator, YHTAR
35 Bromley Road
Bingley BD16 4DA
West Yorkshire

to arrive by 5 April 2002. Cheques made payable to "YHTAR"

Please give you name and full contact details, and the names of any guests. Strictly, first come, first served, the numbers are very limited and you will need a ticket to gain entry, and to be served lunch!

Yorkshire and the Humber Transport Activists Roundtable Annual General Meeting

The Guildhall, York – Saturday April 13 2002, starting at 2.00pm

Agenda

- 1/ Apologies for absence
- 2/ Minutes of last AGM (copies will be available)
- 3/ Chairman's report: – Colin Speakman
- 4/ Treasurer's report: – Graham Collett
- 5/ Co-ordinator's report: – Steve Broadbent
- 6/ Any other committee reports
- 7/ Election of chairman and committee for 2002/3, also consideration of appointment and fee for co-ordinator for 2002/3 and appointment of those with executive responsibilities.
- 8/ Subscriptions for 2002/3
- 9/ Any other business.
- 10/ Date of next General Meeting and the 2003 Annual General Meeting

Nominations for any post, or notification from any committee member that he/she wishes to stand down, and Apologies for Absence, to the Co-ordinator before the day, please.

The meeting is open to all, whether you are a paid up member or not.

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 & T2000) Peter Davies (Brighouse; Railfuture)

Diary Dates

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).

Monday 8 April: AGM.

Saturday, May 11: "Traffic Free Tourism" by Jean Hunter at Harewood House. (*see page 5*)

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

In addition the **T2000WY Bus Group** meets regularly in the bar of the Golden Lion Pub, Swinegate, Leeds, and the **T2000WY Rail Group** meets on Mondays every two months at 19.15 in the Grove Inn, (just over Victoria Bridge immediately south of Leeds rail station) – Ian Davies will have the details.

Skipton-East Lancashire Rail Action Partnership (SELRAP)

Public Meeting

to be held 7.00 - 9.00pm

on Friday 24 May 2002

in St Stephen's Primary School Hall

Gargrave Road, Skipton

where the aims of the Group will be discussed. Guest Speakers invited

*Information from Steve Broadbent,
chairman, as below*

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