



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

from **Tim Calow**

This month you have a 'stop press' chairman's report reflecting on the draft 'Yorkshire and Humber-side Route Utilisation Strategy'. The report projects passenger growth of nearly 50% by 2017/18. It notes existing overcrowding on West Yorkshire services and sets out plans to cope with this growth.

In Airedale the focus is on peak hour capacity into Leeds. No changes are proposed to Bradford services. The preferred solution is a turnback facility at Keighley. There would also need to be an extra bay platform at Leeds (beyond platform 1). Platform lengthening is implied for Cononley, Steeton & Silsden and Bingley. In the three hour peak periods the existing six half-hourly local services (all 4-car) would then be replaced by four six-car semi-fast services from Skipton. These services will call at local stations to Keighley and then only at Bingley. There would be "up to five" 4-car all stations services from Keighley to Leeds. Elsewhere mention

is made of constraints in the signalling and electrification system but there is no analysis of potential solutions.

We are concerned that the report implies a reduction in peak train frequencies to/from Leeds from most Airedale stations (from six to either five or four trains). It is far from clear how these plans are consistent with a regular interval timetable and how the services from beyond Skipton will be incorporated. The mix of three and four car trains will complicate train planning. The report may well have found the cheapest way of increasing peak hour capacity. It does not (I believe) provide a strategic view of how the full potential of the railway could be exploited to serve the travel needs of local people. These are some early thoughts. The full report

Above: 333 002 at Leeds on 2 August, after arriving with the 10.18 from Skipton, showing the new Northern livery applied to this unit.
Tim Calow

is available on Network Rail's website.

We will be commenting during the consultation period (up to 18th December). We would be interested to hear your views – so do please get in touch. There will be more in our next newsletter.

I am feeling much better after my holidays in Germany (where the sun did shine and the trains ran on time). Back here there is economic gloom, awful weather – but at least the trains seem still to be running on time – even if the Route Utilisation Strategies are late!

Train News

Our electric trains are currently going through the works for their 'C6' overhauls. This is one of the major overhauls in the life of a train. It isn't however obvious to us passengers as most of the work on the bogies and electrical equipment is invisible (but see the new looking coupling equipment in the front-page picture of 333 002). Limited work has been done on the train interiors including some new carpeting.

The first two units to receive attention have come out in a new livery. The repainting of the fleet has however been suspended because Angel and Northern are unhappy with the results on these first two trains. We wait to see how the livery will be changed.

Ticket Gates at Leeds

Work began on 1 August to install automatic ticket gates at Leeds, a £1.6 million investment aimed at improving access through the station at busy times and at reducing fraudulent (ticketless) travel. An immediate effect is that the facility to buy tickets has been moved from next to the entrance to close to the exit from platform 2. This is generally convenient for us Airedale passengers, except in the peak hours when the area can become rather congested.

Once the gates are in operation then the key issues will be their reliability, the ticket changes needed so that season

tickets of various sorts (especially Metro tickets) can operate the gates and the arrangements for passengers with incompatible tickets to bypass the gates. We have made our views known in our meetings with Northern Rail. We will continue to do so and it would help us if you can contact us with details of your own experience.

Bus Substitutions

Buses replaced trains between Keighley and Skipton on Sundays 14, 21 and 28 September. The arrangements on the first Sunday went well. As far as we are aware the buses (with one exception) all went to the agreed calling points. These are the mill car park in Cononley (one driver was deterred by the road closed sign at Lane End and missed out Cononley) and the bus stop adjacent to the Skipton bound platform, at Steeton & Silsden. Please contact us with details of your experiences (good or bad).

There was some confusion over the dates on which the two Sunday morning Morecambe services were running. The first Morecambe & Carlisle poster (including the morning Morecambe services) was dated 14 and 21 September. The Morecambe trains were not in fact running on 21st. We pointed this out and the incorrect posters should have been replaced by a corrected poster for 21st & 28th.

Environmental Sustainability

We are all aware that our local trains have far less impact on the environment than cars do. There is however always more that can be done. We are therefore delighted that Northern has just published an environmental sustainability strategy. The document sets out measures already taken and gives details of future projects. Work will continue to measure and reduce energy consumption – both of trains and buildings. A particularly exciting project is the new 'Eco station' at Accrington.

Tim Calow

Robin Sisson 1955 - 2008

It was with great sadness that I discovered that Robin Sisson had died on 24 June after being hit by a car in Sheffield.

Robin, who lived only a couple of streets away from me in Saltaire, was an English teacher at Bradford Grammar School until he retired early. He was passionate about the railways, and was instrumental in the re-opening of, and then in arranging for many pupils to use, Frizinghall station.

Robin then joined Rail Passenger

Committee, first in the north-east and then the north-west, and he often passed me information useful to our rail users' group. He always supported our aims and I recollect he spoke at one of our AGMs. More recently, he had taken a position on the editorial team of *Today's Railways*, published by Platform 5 in Sheffield. He was a gentleman and a pleasure to know.

His funeral was held on 25 July at a full United Reformed Church in Saltaire.

Keith Preston

Positive Staff

Rather than always be negative which it is easy to do when commenting on any large organisation I thought I would like to strike a more positive note from some of my travel experiences this year.

A lot of my journeys take me beyond the Aire Valley, some involving three part journeys over a few days and I have always found the local ticket office staff very helpful in ensuring that I have the best possible combination.

Further, even the best railways will occasionally encounter problems – often not necessarily of their own making.

Whether it was a vital interview in Leeds when the Aire Valley line was flooded at Kirkstall, or a train

failure on the Hope Valley line, or an overbridge being struck by a lorry outside Manchester I have been impressed with the quality of customer service shown from ticket office and train staff.

In one case a conductor went out of his way to check the state of play on the possible alternatives and another booking office clerk carefully checked that trains were still running further down the line. Being told what is happening will not make the journey any quicker nor get rid of the delay but is reassuring to know that staff are doing their best to give me as much information as they can to minimise the disruptions.

Well done.

Rod Tickner

AVRUG Web site

A couple of AGMs ago I enthusiastically volunteered to take over managing the group's web site (www.avrug.org.uk) from Rod Tickner...

As things have worked out, while I keep the site up-to-date with engineering

news and timetable links, I have not had the time, nor have I the skills, to manage and develop it properly, it needs far more care and attention!!!

If anyone would like to take this task on, it does not need much time, once it is developed as the "webmaster" would want, then do please contact Tim Calow
Steve Broadbent

News from the Leeds-Lancaster Morecambe Community Rail Partnership



Another meeting of the Management Group was held on Wednesday 10 September 2008, reports Rod Tickner.

Drew Haley, for Northern Rail, reported good news with patronage of the line showing a steady increase. Passenger numbers are up 7% and revenue over 10% for the line as a whole. The best growth has been in passengers from the smaller intermediate stations. It is heartening to see passengers continuing to be attracted to the service. Route performance is not as good however at 76% within 5 minutes of booked arrival time, this is mainly due to temporary speed restrictions on an unstable embankment beyond Skipton. Unfortunately this is likely to be in force until well into 2009.

A seat has now been provided at Giggleswick on the down platform although finding any suitable waiting shelter that fits with current safety requirements and Network Rail specifications seems unlikely.

The opening of the buildings for the use of Bentham Development Trust at

Bentham Station went well and it is good to see the premises being used.

The Rail Utilisation Strategy has taken note of representations made and withdrawn the comments about terminating all the services at Skipton. It is understood that changing trains can deter as many as 17% of would be customers; my own experience is that changing trains can be fraught on any service. There is always a balance to be achieved between additional trains (which terminating at Skipton might have helped) and the convenience of the journeys.

The CRP is committed to increasing the frequency of trains along this route, ultimately to a two-hourly frequency. There is a proposal to increase the service by one service a day by using stock that spends some time in Leeds - this is known as Option 2 from a study undertaken by TAS a transport consultancy. However

144 008 at Lancaster on a Leeds to Morecambe train - next to 156 470, the kind of unit which we would like on this service.
Tim Calow

such developments would need to be fitted in with other services especially around Leeds and Lancaster where the demands of the West Coast Main Line make changes more challenging. The knock-on effects on Aire Valley services would need careful examination and the Department for Transport would want any developments to be cost-neutral.

At the last meeting the proposed December 2008 timetable showed a potential deterioration in the service with the current 1638 Morecambe departure being delayed by an hour, starting at Lancaster at 1803 thus giving about 5.5 hours between through trains from Morecambe. As can be imagined this was strongly argued against and thanks to some good work from planners the proposed December afternoon service is near what we enjoy today.

The proposed timings are now 1622 off Morecambe but missing out Lancaster, arriving in Skipton at 1739

and continuing onto Leeds (due 1815) which is a useful bonus as the current equivalent train terminates at Skipton. Obviously the timings may well alter somewhat between planning and actual implementation.

The 1019 departure from Leeds is planned to go through to Heysham, arriving at 1255 with departure at 1315 for arrival in Leeds at 1539.

Views on the timetable are always welcome; however at Lancaster Northern Rail services have to vie with Trans Pennine Express and the West Coast Main Line for paths between Carnforth and Lancaster and the junctions to and from Morecambe.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 11 November so please let me know of any issues that you feel are pertinent.

The website is well worth a visit: <http://www.lmr.co.uk>

THE LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

We made representations against the proposed changes to Lancaster line services, terminating trains from Morecambe & Lancaster at Skipton, as we were concerned about the adverse effect to through passengers from the Aire Valley to Lancaster and Morecambe and also to people from Gargrave and other local stations who travel to Leeds.

So AVRUG is pleased at the conclusion "The proposal in the consultation draft of this RUS to increase frequency between Lancaster and Skipton at the expense of through services to Leeds was broadly opposed in consultation responses. As the value for money case was at best marginal, this recommendation has been withdrawn". We also agree with the comment "The Morecambe-Leeds service provides a poor service for

commuters to both Lancaster and Leeds, arriving too late in the morning to be useful. The service is also relatively infrequent."

AVRUG hopes that these remaining issues might be addressed, perhaps combined with improvements to capacity between Leeds and Skipton.

On the Settle and Carlisle line the report concludes that "an hourly passenger service between Leeds and Carlisle cannot operate with the existing level of freight traffic without a substantial level of investment in infrastructure – for which there is no economic case. The existing level of freight traffic is expected to remain for the foreseeable future, and could potentially grow.

Operating a greater number of passenger services on the Se&C where paths exist on current infrastructure would give medium value for money, including rolling stock lease costs, but is subject to rolling stock availability. The case would be made stronger if the service were operated with marginal time of peak units.

It is hence recommended that the base passenger service is a two hourly pattern, designed to give connections at Carlisle and meet commuter needs, and that this is augmented with additional services where the likely passenger market and space in the

timetable coincide and rolling stock is available.

In combination with WCML work, the maintainer believes that steady state maintenance of the S&C can be achieved within agreed midweek night possessions. The strategy for renewals work on the line can only be established in conjunction with a strategy for the Glasgow and South West Line the WCML and the East Coast Main Line and will need to be developed within the West Coast Main Line RUS and the Seven-day railway workstream". So it sounds like the scope for short-term improvements is very limited!

To charge or not to charge – that is the question (The musings of the VC)

Sometimes thoughts about car parking charges are mentioned in various conversations. At the moment, paying to park at hospitals is in the news, now that Scotland has followed Wales in deciding that at all hospitals (except three built with PFI money) there will be free parking. England, for the time being, has decided to keep the status quo. There are so many arguments both for and against.

In *RAIL 600* there are many mentions about car parking at railway stations. One article stated that Apperley Bridge is to have a large park-and-ride-facility and I ask, will it be free? Should it be free? Car parking spaces cost money: it can be hundreds of thousands of pounds. If there are charges will motorists be deterred and continue their journey by car?

Crossflatts could be a prime example of the dilemma when, as far as car parking charges go, Bradford city centre is cheap.

An interesting article appeared in

the 6 August 2008 *Surrey Herald* (Walton, Weybridge and Hersham edition). Elmbridge Council had been charging £3.50 per day at rail stations and in the quarter April to June 2007, the authority had an income of £112,844 yet in the same quarter this year, they made an extra £11.00. The reason is clear – the £3.50 had become £5.00 (a 43% increase).

The unpopular price increase has incurred the fury of the commuters and the former editor of *The Sun* Kelvin MacKenzie who lives in Weybridge. He is so incensed he has vowed to become leader of the Council, though he was not successful in gaining a seat in the May elections. There are new thoughts of reducing the charges as more and more cars block roads around those stations.

At some point in the future, Metro may decide that free parking at stations will have to come to an end, but how much? Now that is the question!

Marten Lougee

Jottings from the editor

Timetable changes

December 14 sees the major annual timetable change date for the UK rail network. I am not aware at the moment of any significant changes locally, but there are major changes in other parts of the country, notably along the London Euston-Manchester/Preston-Glasgow main line, so do check carefully if your usual journeys are affected.

Northern Rail, our local train operator, is introducing a new hourly Leeds-Barnsley-Sheffield-Nottingham service from that date, the first direct link between Leeds and Nottingham for many years, and there will now be four 'fast' trains per hour between Leeds and Sheffield, two via Barnsley and two via Wakefield Westgate.

There will also be an additional service between Leeds and Manchester Victoria, via Brighouse, while one train per hour via Halifax will be speeded up by omitting stops at some smaller stations, giving a Bradford-Manchester time of 59 minutes.

Engineering work

Work continues on the Settle and

Carlisle line at various locations north of Skipton, and this will mean the line will be closed on Sundays in November and early-December.

The Leeds-Lancaster/Morecambe/Heysham service will also be affected by engineering works between Christmas and New Year. Full details are on the AVRUG web site, but again do check before planning a journey.

The junction just to the south of Bradford Interchange station is being re-modelled, and the station will be closed from October 24 to November 2.

Major work continues in a tunnel to the south of Sheffield until mid-December. This affects services towards Derby, Birmingham and London St Pancras, but there is also some impact on Leeds-Sheffield trains, so again, do check.

Finally, in past *airlines* we have mentioned the battle to provide more services from Yorkshire to London, with several bids competing for the very scarce capacity there is on the route. The Office of Rail Regulation, which decides such matters, will make an announcement "by the end of October".



Tailpiece - nothing at all to do with the Aire Valley, but a reminder of sunny summer holidays by train from our friends at Arriva Cross Country, which operates trains through Leeds to the south-west.

Letters, ?? and !!

AVRUG welcomes 'Letters to the Editor', whether questions about our railways or comments on them, for possible inclusion in *airelines*. Please address them to the Editor, as below, and we will do our best to fully answer points raised. Letters will be published as space permits, and may be edited.

Longer contributions to *airelines* are also welcome, but please contact the Editor in advance, to ensure space is available and to agree content and deadlines, etc.

Subs and £££s

AVRUG does its work in lobbying for better and more reliable services along the Aire Valley thanks to its loyal membership, who pay just £3 a year for the privilege!! Donations or sponsorship to allow us to do even

more are just as gratefully welcomed! The address for subscriptions is below, for donations please contact the Treasurer.

Our web site...

www.avrug.org.uk, is continually being developed, and includes more travel news – especially news of local engineering works. Do keep an eye on it!!

Next Newsletter...

...is due to be published early in 2009. Many apologies for the late-running of this issue!

Thanks to...

...**Northern Rail**, for generous sponsorship which makes publication to this standard possible. And to Tim Calow, Marten Lougee and Rod Tickner who have helped with words, and my wife Viv for the design and proof-reading.

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