

REPORT OF CHAIR OF TRANSPORT & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE**PROPOSED AFFILIATION TO EXTERNAL RAIL BODIES****Purpose of the Report**

To seek approval for the Council to be a member of Rail North.

Information and Advice**Devolution of rail services to 'Rail North'.**

1. Since 1969 England's 6 largest conurbations have had Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) which have had significant responsibilities for local bus and rail services. In March 2012 the Government published a White Paper which proposed the possibility of devolving full responsibility for some rail franchises to local authorities including outside of the PTA areas.
2. At the initiative of a number of PTAs, a group called Rail North is being set up to take forward devolution of rail services across the whole of the north of England which are run by the Northern and Trans-Pennine franchises. The Northern franchise services include 2 in Nottinghamshire:-
 - Nottingham – Sheffield - Leeds, and
 - Sheffield – Worksop – Retford – Lincoln,so Nottinghamshire County Council is eligible to participate in Rail North.
3. The PTAs have proved to be very effective in promoting rail services in their areas with generally more investment, services at higher frequencies and lower fares than in non-PTA areas. Rail North offers the possibility of such benefits being rolled out across the whole Rail North area, including to the 2 Rail North services through Nottinghamshire.
4. The Council has long-standing aspirations for improvement of both the potential local Rail North services.

a) Nottingham – Sheffield – Leeds

This service was introduced in December 2008, in response to the substantial campaign by Nottinghamshire County Council and South Yorkshire PTA in recognition of which the inaugural train was formally named 'County of Nottinghamshire'. However, because of various limitations to the infrastructure and timetabling, journey times are extremely slow, with the 81 miles taking 2 hours at an end-to-end speed of just 40½mph, so the Council has been working towards a 2-stage reduction of journey time initially to 1 hour 40 minutes, then to 1 hour 20 minutes, hopefully by December 2019.

b) Sheffield – Worksop – Retford – Lincoln,

The existing service consists of 1 train an hour throughout the day plus 1 additional service between Sheffield and Worksop in the morning and evening peak periods. This is far lower than on equivalent services in PTA areas, where at least 2, and often 3 or 4 trains per hour throughout the day is standard. Because trains call at 5 intermediate stations between Worksop and Sheffield, including Shireoaks in Nottinghamshire, average speeds are very low, with the 15¾ miles between Worksop and Sheffield taking 30 minutes at an average speed of just 31½mph. The Council therefore has an aspiration to have 2 trains an hour throughout the day between Worksop and Sheffield, and to have significantly quicker journey times with one non-stop train per hour taking just 20 minutes (47mph); and one train per hour calling at the intermediate stations taking around 25 minutes (38mph).

5. The Council has done a lot of detailed work towards its aspirations for these two services. Some investment in the infrastructure would be required to enable higher speeds and so quicker journey times. Crucially, making the services faster would make them cheaper to operate, as the service would need fewer train sets and train crews to operate (because each train set and crew could operate more trips each). Rail North support for these proposals will add weight to the Council's position, and is likely to help secure these improvements.
6. The emerging Rail North proposals include opportunities to influence future services, including securing improvements on both the Nottinghamshire routes. Following intensive liaison between the Council and Rail North, it was announced on 27th February that there are to be some significant improvements to the Worksop – Sheffield service
 - an enhanced Sunday service by 2017, with more than double the current number of trains; and
 - An increase from 1 train per hour to a train every 30 minutes on Mondays – Saturdays by 2019
7. The Rail North proposals have been worked on since 2012 with involvement from the Council. The proposals have now reached the stage of being sufficiently developed so that Rail North is being formally constituted and formal membership sought. Around 30 Councils are eligible for membership of Rail North, and it looks as if all are choosing to participate, in recognition of and to benefit from any improvements that are likely to arise.

Financial Implications

8. It is proposed that Rail North should have an annual budget of £36,000 for 2015/16, which would be shared between the affiliated Authorities pro-rata to the proportion of Rail North services in an Authority's area. For Nottinghamshire that proportion is just 0.3%, resulting in an annual subscription fee of £108 in 2015/16 which is the year from which subscriptions would start. Funding would come from the Transport Policy & Programmes Team rail revenue budget.
9. The governing body of Rail North is a Leader's board, which would meet annually or more often if required. Nottinghamshire would be represented by either the Leader or the Chair of Transport & Highways committee

10. It would be possible at any stage for the Council to withdraw from Rail North, simply by giving 6 months' notice of an intention to withdraw.

Other Options Considered

11. The only alternative to joining Rail North would be for the Council to try to lobby on its own for improvements on the Sheffield – Worksop – Retford – Lincoln line and on the Nottingham – Sheffield – Leeds line. However, without the collective strength given by having 30 Councils supporting the enhancements to which Nottinghamshire aspires, the Council's chances of securing those improvement would be considerably less

Reasons for Recommendations

12. Being a member of Rail North will significantly enhance the ability of the Council to secure enhancements to the rail services on the Sheffield – Worksop – Retford – Lincoln line and on the Nottingham – Sheffield – Leeds line

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is proposed that Nottinghamshire County Council affiliates to Rail North.

Councillor Kevin Greaves
Chairman of Transport & Highways Committee

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
Jim Bamford 0115 97773172

Constitutional Comments (HD 03/03/2015)

14. Policy Committee has the authority to deal with the recommendations.

Financial Comments ([NDR 03/03/2015])

15. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 8 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

'None'

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

'All'