

11th February 2016

Agenda Item: 8

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS

NORTHERN RAIL ISSUES

Purpose of the Report

To report recently announced improvements to Nottinghamshire's rail services operated by the Northern rail franchise.

Information and Advice

Background

1. Two of Nottinghamshire's rail services
 - Sheffield – Worksop – Retford - Lincoln, and
 - Nottingham – Sheffield – Leedsare operated by the Northern rail franchise. The current franchise ends soon and a new Northern franchise will commence in April 2016.
2. As reported previously (to the December 2014 Transport & Highways Committee meeting), the Government published a White Paper in 2012 which proposed the possibility of devolving responsibility for some rail franchises to local authorities. A group of 29 Councils, called 'Rail North' has been set up to take forward devolution of the local and regional services across the north of England, operated under the 'Northern' and 'Trans-Pennine' franchises.
3. Because we have the 2 'Northern' services, Nottinghamshire has been involved since 2013 in the work to set up Rail North. The Council's Policy Committee agreed in March 2015 that the Council would become a member of Rail North, at a subscription of £108 per annum.
4. DfT and Rail North announced on December 9th that the forthcoming Northern franchise (which will be jointly administered by DfT and Rail North) had been awarded to Arriva Rail North Ltd, the parent company of which is Deutsche Bahn, the German state railway company. The new franchise will commence on 1st April 2016.
5. It is unfortunate that the titles of these bodies are so similar, but to help clarity
 - '**Rail North**' is the body set up by the 29 Councils (inc Notts CC) to let the franchises,
 - '**Northern Rail**' is the name of the company which operates the current franchise, and
 - '**Arriva Rail North**' is the company to which the new franchise has been awarded, and which will operate the train services from April 2016.

Council work

6. For the last few years the Council has repeatedly raised the case for improvements to these services, particularly to the frequency and journey time, with DfT, with Rail North, and with the companies bidding for the new franchise.
7. One of the key aspects of Rail North work with which the Council had been heavily engaged was in drawing up the service specification for the next franchise (that will commence in April 2016). In February 2015 DfT and Rail North published that service specification, which stipulated a number of very significant improvements to the 2 Nottinghamshire services, in particular for Worksop and for Nottingham – Leeds.
8. Once the service specification had been published the Council worked hard to persuade the bidders to introduce further improvements over and above the specified service, and as a result Arriva Rail North has included extra improvements, particularly for Retford.
9. The combination of
 - The improvements required by DfT & Rail North, and
 - The further improvements offered by Arriva rail North,means that the new franchise contains a package of very substantial improvements for the 2 Nottinghamshire services.

Sheffield – Worksop – Retford – Lincoln

Current service.

10. The current Monday to Saturday service is one train per hour from 06.30 to 23.00, with one additional service in each of the morning and evening peak periods. Journey times are relatively slow, with Worksop - Sheffield taking 33 minutes. The Council has been working for several years to secure an increase in frequency to 2 trains per hour, and a reduction in journey time.
11. The current Sunday service is of just 6 trains in each direction, running at irregular intervals, and does not start until mid-afternoon. The Council has been working for several years to secure a service at hourly intervals from 10.00 until 22.00.
12. The new franchise contains several very big improvements for the 2 Nottinghamshire services

Improvements to Frequency

13. As from December 2019 there will be a big increase in the number of trains for both Worksop and Retford.

a) Mondays to Saturdays

An additional train in each direction will operate every hour from 07.00 – 19.00 between Retford, Worksop and Sheffield.

	Total number of trains per day (in both directions i.e. the total both to & from Sheffield)		Number of additional trains
	Current	From December 2019	
Worksop – Sheffield	40	66 (33 each way)	26 (13 each way)
Retford - Sheffield	38	64 (32 each way)	26 (13 each way)

This will give both Worksop and Retford a train to and from Sheffield every 30 minutes for 12 hours of the day (approx. 07.00 – 19.00), plus an hourly service in the evenings (currently it is a train every 60 minutes all day, with 1 extra in the morning and evening peak periods).

1 train per hour will continue beyond Retford to Lincoln (via Gainsborough), exactly as it does now.

There are also 36 Robin Hood Line trains per day at Worksop (18 each way – at almost hourly intervals throughout the day), so the total number of trains at Worksop will be 102 every weekday. This will be most frequent train service Worksop has ever had since the station opened in 1849.

b) Sundays

There will also be a big increase in Sunday services for both Worksop and Retford as from December 2017, with effectively a Lincoln - Retford – Worksop – Sheffield train in each direction every hour from 10.00 – 22.00

	Total number of trains per day (in both directions i.e. the total both to & from Sheffield)		Number of additional trains
	current	From December 2017	
Worksop - Sheffield	40	66 (33 each way)	26 (13 each way)
Retford - Sheffield	38	64 32 each way)	26 (13 each way)

Improvements to Journey times

14. There will also be a significant improvement in the journey times of half of the trains for most of the day, as, of the 2 trains per hour between Retford, Worksop and Sheffield, 1 will stop at all stations and one will run non-stop between Worksop and Sheffield.

	Journey time now	Journey time from 2019		Reduction in journey time for 1 train per hour
		For the train that calls at the 5 smaller stations	For the train that runs non-stop Worksop - Sheffield	
Sheffield - Worksop	30 minutes	30 minutes	24 minutes (max)	6 Minutes
Sheffield - Retford	40 minutes	40 minutes	34 minutes (max)	6 Minutes
Retford - Sheffield	44 minutes	44 minutes	38 minutes (max)	6 Minutes
Worksop - Sheffield	34 minutes	34 minutes	28 minutes (max)	6 Minutes

The additional time for trains heading into Sheffield, both now and in the future, is to allow them to fit in between all the other services on the very intensively used tracks into Sheffield station.

15. The new trains (see para 17 below) will be capable of 100mph, but the speed limit on this line is just 60mph all the way between Retford and Sheffield (with a couple of lower limits at particular locations e.g. Woodhouse junction or the approaches to Sheffield). If the track and related infrastructure was upgraded it would be possible to raise the speed limit to 100mph so that the new trains could operate at their top speed. If that was done then it should be possible to reduce the journey times for 1 train per hour (the train that won't call at the small intermediate stations) to give a potential faster journey time of

- Sheffield – Worksop 15 minutes
- Sheffield – Retford 24 minutes
- Retford – Sheffield 28 minutes
- Worksop – Sheffield 19 minutes

The Council will continue to press Rail North to upgrade the track and related infrastructure so as to achieve these potential journey time improvements at the earliest opportunity.

Improved Onward connectivity

16. Currently trains from the Retford & Worksop line continue beyond Sheffield to Meadowhall, Rotherham, Doncaster and Scunthorpe. In future at least 20 (10 each way) of the fast Lincoln-Retford-Worksop-Sheffield trains will continue beyond Sheffield to Meadowhall, Barnsley, Wakefield and Leeds providing a fast inter-regional link. This will maintain the direct link between the Worksop line and Meadowhall. It will also provide a direct express service most hours Worksop – Leeds, which will be particularly valuable. The local stopping services between Retford and Sheffield will terminate at Sheffield.

New trains

17. Arriva Rail North will purchase a fleet of new 100mph trains for about 30% of its services. They will be

- air-conditioned;
- fully accessible to people with reduced mobility, and
- to the latest standards of comfort and design.

These will be used on the Lincoln – Retford – Worksop – Sheffield – Leeds service. They should be capable of giving a Worksop – Leeds journey time of around 1¼ hours, which should be able to be brought down to around an hour if/when the track and related infrastructure was upgraded. It will take a couple of years to contract for and build the new trains, so it is not yet known exactly when they will enter services, though it must be no later than 2019.

18. In addition to acquiring new trains for some services, all the other trains to be used by Arriva Rail North will be completely refurbished and upgraded to modern standards, including being

- air-conditioned;
- fully accessible to people with reduced mobility,
- with completely new interiors (seats, carpets, lighting etc.)

so that to the average passenger they will appear to be as good as new.

The new (additional) Retford – Worksop - Sheffield service will be operated by the upgraded trains.

Nottingham – Sheffield – Leeds

19. The current service consists of one train per hour Nottingham – Sheffield - Leeds. This adds to the existing Nottingham – Sheffield – Manchester - Liverpool service, giving a train every 30 minutes between Nottingham and Sheffield. (There is also an additional Sheffield - Leeds service every hour, giving a train every 30 minutes between Sheffield and Leeds).
20. The new service was introduced in December 2008 following much work and lobbying by the Council and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority. It has proved to be very successful, with the number of passengers travelling between Nottingham and Sheffield roughly doubling in the last 7 years.
21. However the journey time on the new service is very poor, taking 2 hours for the 82 miles to Leeds. It has been a Council priority to secure a significant improvement in journey time, and much work has been undertaken towards that. As a result of the Council's work, the 2011 'Initial Industry Plan' for the development of the rail network, identified Nottingham – Leeds for development as one of "two (national) exemplar schemes to deliver journey time improvements between regional cities".
22. In 2014 the Council met with the Head of DfT's Rail Executive and the DfT Head of Rail Franchising, as a result of which the formal 'Invitation to Tender' for the Northern rail franchise stated
"We received detailed proposals from Nottinghamshire County Council about their ambition for faster services between Nottingham and Leeds and elsewhere, including details of how this could reduce costs and release rolling stock by enabling the service to be run with one less train set and crew. Bidders will be expected to identify and lead the implementation of journey time reduction opportunities in conjunction with Network Rail and other operators, both as part of their submission and during the franchise."

Improvements for Nottingham – Sheffield – Leeds

23. As part of the franchise announcement in December, it was confirmed by Rail North that the Nottingham – Chesterfield – Sheffield – Leeds service will be very significantly speeded-up. The precise details are still in the process of being established, but the formal announcement accompanying the award of the franchise stated
"Nottingham and Chesterfield will also be part of the Northern Connect network, with ten brand new diesel trains per day running to Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford. These journeys will be faster – Nottingham to Leeds in 100 minutes".
24. The speed-up is being achieved
 - in part by using the new trains which will have a top speed of 100mph (see para 17 above), and
 - by using a different, faster route between Sheffield and LeedsIt has not been possible to ascertain whether any works are being done to the track and other infrastructure to raise the speed limits on this route - further information is being sought and will be reported to the committee when it is available. If the infrastructure is not being upgraded now then that could still be done at a subsequent date, in which case it should be possible to reduce the journey time further.

25. It is not yet clear from what date these changes will be implemented, but it will be no later than December 2019. The Council will press for it to be introduced earlier than 2019/as soon as possible.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. 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

27. It is recommended that Committee notes the report, and welcomes all the improvements to Nottinghamshire's rail services

Neil Hodgson
Service Director Highways

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
Jim Bamford – Rail Officer. (tel: 0115 9773172)

Constitutional Comments (SJE – 02/02/2016)

28. As this report is only for noting by Committee, Constitutional Comments are not required.

Financial Comments (GB – 02/02/2016)

29. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report

Background Papers

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All