

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, SEPTEMBER 2014

Internal

Following a long discussion at our 2013 AGM, it was agreed that the key roles of the organisation were to give a collective regional response to consultations and to act as an umbrella body for regional user groups.

Spending on transport schemes is now mainly in the hands of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and Local Transport Boards for the same areas. Probably the main disappointment over the year is that we have not found an effective way of influencing these organisations.

This year, Louise McGuinness resigned from the Steering Group as she was unable to attend meetings. Alan Meredith stood down from the post of Vice-Chair, being replaced by David Harby. As ever, my thanks go to all members of the Steering Group for their efforts on behalf of the organisation.

We have held four Steering Group meetings during the year and I would like to thank Nottingham City Council, Kettering Borough Council, East Midlands Airport and East Midlands Trains (EMT) for hosting them.

As usual, Colleen Hempson from EM Airport gave us an update on activities there during the meeting that she hosted, covering both surface access and changes to the airport fabric and destinations served.

We have not held a public meeting this year.

We continue to be represented on a number of groups not directly involved with providing public transport. These include the EM Rail Forum; Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Rail Action Committee (LANRAC); EM Airport Surface Access Forum; Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Advisory Committee; Notts' Bus Forum; EM Transport Activists Round Table; One East Midlands.

I would like to thank EMT for their help with travel to events held near stations on their network.

We continue to deal with a steady flow of enquiries, mainly via our website.

Rail

There has not been one focus of activity this year - several topics have been highlighted at different times.

Over-lapping between two TWEM Annual Reports was the Nottingham Blockade, which affected services for 37 days last summer while the station was remodelled and re-signalled. Large numbers of services were replaced with buses. Back-office EMT and Network Rail staff, along with volunteers (including some SG members) were set on as passenger assistants, especially at Nottingham and East Midlands Parkway. I found it an interesting experience. The impression gained from passengers on trains and replacement buses, and from EMT management, was that everything generally worked well. Our secretary, Steve Abbott, wrote an account of the project for *Modern Railways*.

The new layout at Nottingham is easier to operate, but does not always work for the convenience of passengers. The excellently refurbished main station building, re-opened in May, suffers from the lack of seating common to most new stations.

A new timetable was introduced on the Midland Main Line in December, with a few minutes knocked off most journeys. Unfortunately, not all line-speed improvements were completed by that date, and punctuality suffered until they were completed. Network Rail are now carrying out work required prior to electrification, e.g. bridges and clearances.

We maintain regular contact with East Midlands Trains (EMT) over day to day problems, including a meeting with the Customer Service Director in June. Several Steering Group members attended a stakeholder conference in November.

Continuing concerns include some regional fares, poor notice of planned disruptions, overcrowding, ticket gate issues and car park charges.

Richard Gibson, Head of Communications at CrossCountry, came to the December meeting. There were sufficient subjects for discussion for the meeting to have lasted until midnight, and he was left in no doubt as to where we considered that there was room for improvement. He made it clear to us that many desirable actions were not possible in the current franchise, particularly with regard to rolling stock, but did promise to look at others. Not all promised feedback has materialised but in fairness, XC were hard hit by the winter weather which will have taken up a lot of management time.

We have continued to participate in the Nottingham-Lincoln Stakeholder Board, and through them are pressing for better services between Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln.

With regard to HS2; we responded briefly to the consultation on the route through the East Midlands. We found it impossible to reach a consensus on the detail, as the proposals affect different areas in different ways. Our main concern remains that HS2 does not result in a worse service for anyone in the region.

We have also responded to the recent consultation on re-franchising the Northern and Trans-Pennine areas.

Buses

As last year, the situation with bus services remains less optimistic than it is with the railways.

Most commercial services are retaining passengers, but changes to Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) have reduced income. No-one is happy with the rate of reimbursement for concessionary fares, but only central government has the power to do much about this, so it is unlikely to change in the short-term.

The squeeze on council spending means that less money is available to subsidise bus services, and these are being (or are likely to be) cut back. This has knock-on effects on operators' overall profitability, and a number of companies have gone out of business. There have recently been major changes to tendered services in Nottinghamshire, and services in other areas are under review.

In the autumn, the Senior Traffic Commissioner consulted on revised Guidance on Bus Punctuality, to which we responded. Several changes have been made to the draft, and a final version is awaited.

By their nature, most changes to bus services are local and are dealt with by our constituent groups, though important developments are discussed by the Steering Group. These have included Northampton's new bus station and pedestrianisation of Loughborough Town Centre.

Jim Froggatt

01.09.14