



**TRAVELWATCH**  
*East Midlands*

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**Promoting Quality Public Transport in the East Midlands**

**Review 2007-8  
and  
Business Plan 2008-9**

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May 2008

*TravelWatch East Midlands is the operating name adopted by the  
East Midlands Public Transport User's Forum*

## *Introduction*

*Passengers expect their views to influence those responsible for public transport and TravelWatch East Midlands was set up in 2004 (initially under the auspices of the then Rail Passenger Committee for the Midlands as the East Midlands Transport Users Forum) to strengthen the voice of public transport passengers in the region.*

*When the RPCs were replaced by a single national body – Passenger Focus – the Forum continued but as TravelWatch East Midlands, providing an independent passenger focus with links to regional government agencies, local authorities and transport operators.*

*Our aim is "to make a difference for passengers". There are many local passenger groups, especially those representing rail users and often passenger issues are common to many user interests. TravelWatch seeks to take such regional issues forward, ensuring that service specifiers and providers are made fully aware of passenger concerns. TravelWatch also seeks to identify best practice from the passenger perspective and to encourage it to spread between operators.*

*We usually hold 2 public meetings a year at which significant issues for passengers are addressed by expert presentations and subsequent debate. We also contribute to the wider transport debate and produce evidence & reports to influence public transport provision. TravelWatch has a representative on the Regional Assembly Transport Group.*

*We also maintain a website @ [www.travelwatcheastmidlands.org.uk](http://www.travelwatcheastmidlands.org.uk).*

*TravelWatch East Midlands is entirely dependant upon its volunteers and sponsors for both financial and technical support, but financial support has so far been linked to a specific project. We are particularly grateful for the assistance that we have received over the years from the Regional Assembly, Regional Development Agency, Nottinghamshire County Council, Leicester City Council, Kettering BC, East Midlands Trains, Whyte Young Green and Encore PR. We are actively seeking further sponsorship to enable us to take forward our work in the coming year.*

*To conclude, none of this would have been possible without the input of an active Steering Group and I would like to express my appreciation of their support. In particular, our Secretary Steve Abbott, who has also led our major project this year, the new franchises. Roger Bacon our efficient and unassuming Treasurer has carefully garnered our well earned funds and Vice-Chairman Jim Froggatt for his support and wise advice.*

*Alan Meredith  
Chairman*

## *1 Purpose and Objectives*

1.1 TravelWatch East Midlands' aim is to promote accessible, affordable and attractive public transport serving the Region.

1.2 Our vision is a public transport network that is:-

- Accessible to everyone
- Affordable and socially inclusive
- Available where and when it is needed
- Acceptable to all and
- Attractive to users

1.3 The key objectives are to:-

- Give users a platform to express their concerns and needs
- Contribute to the development of regional transport strategies
- Undertake evidence based research into areas of concern to public transport users and
- Produce best practice reports based upon that evidence

## *2 Achievements and Outputs*

2.1 Given our limited resources, the year has been particularly busy and your Steering Group has met each quarter to guide the work of the organisation. We were pleased to welcome two new members at the AGM in July, Christopher Groome of LANRAC and Louise McGuinness of Spalding & Peterborough Transport Forum. Paul Clark resigned in July and I would like to record our gratitude for his support in setting up TravelWatch EM. Fortunately Paul has been able to continue with practical support of our work, in his capacity as website organiser.

2.2 We are extremely grateful to Midland Mainline, East Midlands Airport and Kettering BC who have each provided meeting facilities.

2.3 We continue to work closely with our member organisations and partners both regionally and nationally, bringing together like minded interests to represent the travelling public. In particular, our close working relationship with Passenger Focus on rail matters has yielded great benefit, hopefully for both organisations.

2.4 TravelWatch is currently represented on a number of groups including the EMRA Transport Group; EM Rail Forum; Greater Notts Light Rail Advisory Committee; Notts Bus Forum; EM Transport Activists Round Table; and the EM Rural Affairs Forum. We have also supported the activities of the Leics & Northants Rail Action Committee (LANRAC). The Chairman meets occasionally with opposite numbers from other

regions and representatives of other national bodies as a national TravelWatch Liaison Group.

- 2.5 Whilst our focus has been forward looking and strategic, we responded to consultations by operators on such things as timetables and new investment and sought meetings when necessary, to raise serious issues such as the inadequacies in the Central Trains operations. We are also seeking closer links via the CPT, with bus operators.

2.5.1 **Local Transport Bill** -

We submitted a response on both the Bill and a subsequent consultation on the role of the Traffic Commissioners. We emphasised the importance of better representation for bus passengers and it is pleasing that DfT has responded positively and following further consultation, determined that Passenger Focus should expand its responsibilities to encompass bus passenger representation. We would hope that regional TravelWatch groups could work closely with Passenger Focus on both bus and rail and exploratory talks are taking place on this with Passenger Focus, CBT and Bus Users-UK.

2.5.2 **Rail Franchise renewals** -

The processes leading to the award and subsequent operation of three new rail franchises (East Midlands, Cross-Country and ECML) have absorbed much of our effort during the year. Having input to the DfT's franchise specification and facilitated meetings between passenger groups and preferred bidders, we continue to press for the best possible services within the resources available.

Our current focus is on the December 2008 timetable deliberations, but we are also mindful of the opportunities that the new franchises hold out for further improvements in both station and service standards.

2.6 **Station Access survey** -

We identified access to and interchange of passenger transport as a key issue, highlighted by the recent emphasis on encouraging a shift from the car to more sustainable transport and undertook some passenger research on rail access to inform that debate.

Passenger surveys were undertaken at six rail stations, achieving an average 21% response. We identified the journey starts from post codes and White Young Green undertook the analysis using their mapping systems.

The results showed some surprises, but as expected highlighted deficiencies in pedestrian access, bus services, parking and cycle storage, which are discouraging potential use of rail. Many of these require relatively low cost solutions or better management and communication of existing facilities to achieve a significant user benefit. The full report is available on our website and the data has been made available to interested operators / local authorities.

One conclusion was that Station Travel Plans detailing means of access and onward travel might be a useful development and it is pleasing to note that at least 2 east midlands stations have been nominated by their local authority as a possible pilot in the DfT/ATOC project.

#### 2.6.1 **Open Access Rail Services –**

Whilst the franchises are the main route for service delivery, we were conscious that we should not overlook open-access options and invited Renaissance Trains to outline that company's plans for open access services in our region. (Renaissance had instigated the successful Hull Trains service and is a partner in the Wrexham, Shrewsbury and Marylebone service, planned to start in 2008.)

They outlined ideas for a Nottingham-Glasgow service, possibly in 12-18 months' time, and a Humber Coast-Lincoln-Cambridge-Stratford (E London) service in 2-4 years using small trains serving many small centres, all of which we welcome.

#### 2.7 **Liverpool-Nottingham-Norwich route -**

Whilst welcoming the new East Midlands Franchise operator, we quickly identified problems with the inter-regional service between Liverpool & Norwich and supported by Passenger Focus have responded to growing passenger concern, initiating an enquiry into the operation of the route.

The study undertaken by a team including TravelWatch North West and local rail user groups will examine the extent of and reasons for passengers' complaints, and consider how these can be resolved. It will address not only current concerns but also future aspirations for this important link across the Region.

The key issue would appear to be lack of capacity and crowding at peak periods, especially west of Nottingham and whilst East Midlands Trains has said that it will increase the number of seats as trains are refurbished, and that some trains will have additional carriages, this is unlikely to be enough to solve the problem.

#### 2.8 **Public Meetings**

##### (a) **'Charging or Choice' 16 October 2007 –**

Looking further ahead, we have considered the Government's recent policy announcements on road congestion and the subsequent East Midlands initiative the "6cs project".

We felt that public reaction to congestion charging so far had focused on road pricing itself and that we should encourage the debate on the bigger picture. There is a clear need to revolutionise transport infrastructure, minimise the problems caused by congestion, improve road safety, support urban regeneration and most importantly, giving us fast and efficient public transport. Road pricing may be part of a solution, but what is needed is a real choice, with good reliable information to make that choice.

We therefore organised an event to bring together representatives of user groups, operators and politicians and to consider the task of getting the East Midlands moving more effectively. We timed our conference to align with the TIF funded congestion study covering the 3 cities sub-area of the East Midlands region - "the 6Cs project".

We were fortunate in attracting a wide range of expert speakers, including the Minister of Transport Rt Hon Rosie Winterton MP, who gave the keynote speech. The event proved to be timely, attracting wide interest and media coverage including BBC & ITV, with subsequent expressions of appreciation from delegates. In her speech, the Minister praised the work of TravelWatch East Midlands and similar voluntary bodies and went on to confirm the Government's commitment to encourage and support financially, initiatives to find solutions to expected road congestion, such as the "6cs project" - by the counties & and cities of Leicester, Nottingham & Derby,.

(b) **'Meet the New Train Companies' 30 November 2007 -**

We were conscious that the 2008 timetables were critical to all three new franchises and that whilst they were tightly constrained by the DfT's specification, there were real choices to be made and it was important that the operators had the opportunity to hear the (sometimes conflicting, but nonetheless important) views of all passenger groups.

We organised this event to provide an opportunity for passenger representatives and interested passengers to meet the operators of the new franchises over a single day. Similar in format to our 'Meet the Bidders' in December 2006, East Midlands Trains, CrossCountry and National Express East Coast each presented their plans and took questions from the representatives present.

Timing of the event ensured that user groups were able to comment on operators initial plans, before the industry negotiations on delivery began.

## **2.10 Developments in Passenger Representation**

(a) **Rail** - We welcome the requirement upon franchisees to introduce passenger consultation arrangements and the promise by Stagecoach of a liaison manager for the new EMT franchise is a good start. Initial work was undertaken on an East Mids Passenger representation proposal, for MML and Passenger Focus, but this was subsequently deferred pending the outcome of the franchise bids.

We will continue support and encourage the operators in this task. Equally we have encouraged new and revitalised local rail user groups.

We also value our strong links to the statutory national body, Passenger Focus and hope that their Board will visit the East Midlands in the coming year.

**(b) Buses –**

We have taken discussion with the bus operators body, the CPT for the East Midlands and hope to develop that relationship. We also work in conjunction with Bus-Users UK and their county groups are all members of TravelWatch East Midlands.

As mentioned previously, DfT has responded positively in favour of a new user body and announced that Passenger Focus' powers would be extended to represent bus passengers also, something that we have welcomed.

**2.11 Communications -**

Contact with users, operators, specifiers and the public generally is important if we are to get over the case for better public transport. We put out press releases on important issues of policy and operation and maintain website <http://www.travelwatcheastmidlands.org.uk>. Steering Group members are called upon from time to time to speak to the media (often at short notice) and we are appreciative of the efforts of Paul Clark in keeping this topical and informative.

It is also our aim to publish a half-yearly newsletter, although due to limited resources, we have only managed to do so once in the past year (see website for copy).

### 3 *Organisation*

3.1 The full membership have the opportunity to meet at the annual general meeting and our public events, usually twice yearly, which address issues of concern in the Region, promote both best practice to operators and local authorities and development of forward-looking public transport policies across the region. Representatives of local transport authorities and public transport providers across the region are also invited to our public meetings and also our Steering Group.

3.2 TravelWatch EM is managed by a Steering Group, nominated from member and partner organisations. The Group meets quarterly to determine the activities, including the content and form of our public meetings.

(The forum's Constitution was adopted in January 2006 and a copy of which is available from the Secretary on request.)

3.3 Current members of the Steering Group are:

Alan Meredith (Chairman) - RCIG  
Stephen Abbott (Hon Sec) - RCIG  
Roger Bacon (Hon Treasurer) - Railfuture East Midlands  
Jim Froggatt (Deputy Chair) - EMTAR  
Paul Fullwood – Passenger Focus  
Christopher Groome – LANRAC  
David Harby – Federation of Small Businesses  
Gyde Horrocks – RCIG (ex RPC)  
Terry Kirby – CBT Leicestershire  
Louise McGuinness – Spalding & Peterborough Transport Forum  
Jean Needham – Railfuture East Midlands  
Michael Patterson – RCIG (ex RPC) &  
David Thornhill – Nottinghamshire Bus-Users UK

Sadly Michael Michael Patterson will be standing down due to personal reasons. We wish him well and are most appreciative of the guidance that he has given over the years.

3.4 The membership of TravelWatch provides a wide resource of expertise and advice which can be drawn upon to support some of its activities also.



## 4 Finances

- 4.1 Our accounts for the year will be reported separately at the AGM.
- 4.2 Whilst we are likely to have broken even over the year and currently carry a modest balance, this masks an underlying problem that is continually limiting our scope. Sponsors have generously covered the costs of projects undertaken, but this has often been after we have started the project from our very limited balances. We have no source of regular income to cover our basic running expenses and consequently live from "hand to mouth" and cannot plan ahead as we would wish. (An example: basic essential insurances on our limited activities, cost £260 per annum.)
- 4.3 Consequently, we urgently require modest sponsorship to cover our basic administrative costs – circa £3,000 pa.

## 5 Proposed Activities 2008-9

- 5.1 During the coming year, work is planned in the following areas:
- **Manifesto for the Liverpool-Norwich route.** As mentioned previously, work has already started on this led by Stephen Abbott
  - **Station Travel Plans.** We will encourage and assist local authorities and operators to make best use of this potentially useful process.
  - **Bus Passenger representation.** With other regional TravelWatch groups we will seek to work closely with Passenger Focus on both bus and rail.
  - **Strategic links, including bus and coach corridors.** Following on the East-West Midlands study two years ago, we have been keen to see improved inter-regional links and welcomed the new rail service to Leeds. We equally wish to see more use of bus links around our region with a view to expanding travel choice and providing an alternative to the private car. EMRA has now produced a new regional strategic public transport map and we would hope to encourage operators and local authorities to better publicise and develop these links.
  - **Concessionary travel.** We will monitor and seek improvement as appropriate in the application of the new scheme.
  - **Inter/multi modal ticketing.** We welcome the proposed standardisation of rail fare structures, but remain concerned that this does not price out the "turn up and go" passenger of limited means. We are also monitoring the extent that operators facilitate multi-modal journeys by through ticketing / plus-bus systems etc.
  - **Interchange at Rail Town Centres and Airports.** We hope to assess the current standards of interchange facilities and suggest where improvements can be made on behalf of passengers.
  - **Rural bus funding - long term funding problems** – TravelWatch North-West has highlighted the issues faced by rural public transport services (spearheading an initiative involving the other TravelWatch

groups in the South West, West Midlands, and East Midlands). This year we hope to build upon this, adding weight to the lobby of both central government and the regional bodies and drawing together best practice from around the country.

- **Temporary rail replacement bus services.** We plan to monitor current practice, identify “best practice” and encourage improvement where required.
- **Other.** Subject to obtaining appropriate funding, we will use our network to undertake further research work on behalf of public transport users. Such work will be mindful of local and regional transport planning issues and be closely geared to passenger priorities and the overriding aim of TravelWatch to improve public transport.