

## **WIRRAL TRANSPORT USERS ASSOCIATION**

### **Notes of Annual General Meeting at Birkenhead YMCA on Monday evening 21.7.2014**

- **Speaker - Cllr. Liam Robinson Chair of Merseytravel who presented the Liverpool City Region Long-Term Rail Strategy** (see separate heading)
- **Business Meeting** (see separate heading)

#### **4.0 Chairman's Report ( 2013-14 )**

Our association's committee met from September - June on the second Tuesday at 19.40 hrs. There were three excursions and one newsletter (the best yet).

We were invited to meetings by many organisations such as: Travel Watch NW, Train Operating Companies, Merseytravel, Network Rail, Rail User Groups (some of committee are members of other groups), Rail Tech. Conference/Exhibition, Liverpool John Lennon Airport. Additionally committee members attend public meetings such as by Network Rail, Transport for Greater Manchester and Cheshire West and Chester Council Planners.

We've been successful but with a reducing committee. Alan Cushion, our one committee member who had a special interest in buses, had to stand down due to health problems of his wife and himself. So we thank Alan and will miss him at our meetings. I also extend my usual thanks to all on my committee.

To sum up we are in particular short of a secretary, committee member (buses), editorial (newsletter) person and a webmaster [a member of the WTUA has since volunteered for the latter post]. So for our future to even exist we urgently need more committee members probably with new ideas. If you are interested, you are welcome to attend the meetings on a Tuesday evening as a visitor. You might later consider being co-opted on to the committee. All of us freely give up our time on meeting nights but it is not necessary to attend every time or commit for a fixed period. With us currently being down to about six members, it is less easy to function so please help if possible.

#### **4.1 Transport**

**RAIL GROWTH** - Nationally continues with a 3.5% increase reported by the Rail Regulator for the first quarter of this year, particularly led by regional figures.

Investment in the Northern Hub continues (focussed on the Manchester Piccadilly-Oxford Road bottleneck), also NW electrification with Huyton-Roby third track now open and wiring completion of Liverpool - Earlestown/Wigan expected in time for some electric services to run to Manchester Airport from December 2014. (Displaced diesel trains expected to reduce overcrowding on other Northern services - something but not enough).

Growth also occurring on Merseyrail with need for new electric units featured in Passenger Focus survey dated April 2014 (as reported in July edition of *Modern Railways*). Merseyrail

Electrics half way through 25 year concession but no resolution yet on new rolling stock. However a refurbishment programme is under way. Birkenhead North is now fully accessible.

Work is now underway on partial redoubling of Saltney Junction on Chester - Wrexham line with completion expected in March 2015.

The Chancellor recently announced £10.4m for Halton Curve redoubling allowing N Wales/Chester or Ellesmere Port - Runcorn - South Parkway - Liverpool passenger or freight services to run in both directions, (subject to final approval). Completion expected in 2016. Electrification extension to Burscough a future possibility because of the new housing in the area.

A new hourly express Liverpool - Newcastle service was introduced via Manchester Victoria running 7 days a week.

Work is now well advanced to make Manchester Airport station a six platform station, (two for Metrolink, expected to open by December - over one year early). A full hourly service is now running Manchester - Glasgow/Edinburgh via Wigan (for Liverpool). Work on a second crossing of Manchester by Metrolink has started with St. Peter's Square new 4-platform station and much going on at Manchester Victoria.

A task force is looking at Chester-Warrington and Crewe electrification which remains on Network Rail's list. Freight traffic has been boosted at Widnes, Greater Manchester waste is running to Ineos Chlor at Runcorn and the siding to Quinn Glass etc. at Ince should be open by the end of the year.

#### CO-ORDINATION

All Rail User Groups, Local Authorities and Train Operators wish for improved services and need to present a united front. Greater Manchester shows the way.

#### CONNECTIVITY

WE have sent a seven page report to Merseyrail on the need to improve connectivity at Chester and Liverpool from the Wirral Line in terms of earlier connections to London and returning from various places. Some good could come if they accept some of the points made.

We support NCRUG on the need to provide improved connections at Ellesmere Port with a day service for Chester University's new site at Thornton. Also WBRUA in their quest for increased train frequencies and reliable services. We are trying but with more 'heads' and more ideas we can apply more pressure. We, or other groups, are taking the lead and sometimes combine as necessary.

#### BUSES

No great changes on Wirral, some go and some come - not surprising given reduced support for bus services. We need to be vigilant as Pennine Bus Company closing down in N. Yorks.

## WATER

Two boats and Manchester Ship Canal Cruises receive good support.

Coastal traffic is steady and oil traffic varies.

Peel Ports are developing West Float, Birkenhead, as a Chinese Trade Centre.

## AIR

Liverpool has lost out to a degree due to transfer of some Ryanair services to Manchester.

Liverpool South Parkway dedicated bus service does not run any more, leaving two local services to connect with trains or half hourly 500 service to Liverpool City centre.