

West Midlands Rail Limited

Single Network Vision

Version 1 – June 2017

Championing the needs of passengers and business, West Midlands Rail will manage local rail services as part of an integrated public transport network, directing future investment at increasing our economic performance



| Version | Date | Author |
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Background

West Midlands Rail (WMR) is the democratically accountable body that has been created to lead rail franchising and strategy for the West Midlands. WMR’s aim is to make the case for investment to create a rail network that supports the region’s economy, together with a locally specified and managed passenger rail franchise for the region.

WMR is made up of the West Midlands Combined Authority and its constituent metropolitan districts, together with the surrounding seven shire and unitary authorities. This membership deliberately mirrors the geography of services that WMR has been granted devolved authority over.

The Single Network Vision

What is the Single Network Vision?

The Single Network Vision (SNV) stands for WMR’s aspiration to be recognised as the country’s best region for rail, characterised by an easy to understand and resilient network, widespread innovation, and collaborative working between all interested parties. WMR aims to achieve this by creating a consistently high standard of customer experience and service delivery across the rail network in the West Midlands, regardless of the identity of the service provider or geographical location.

Why is it Important?

“Success”, wrote the American entrepreneur Jim Rohn, “is neither magical nor mysterious”. Rather, it is “the natural consequence of consistently applying basic fundamentals”. In many walks of life this maxim is as simple to apply as it is to understand. A restaurateur, for example, is hardly likely to employ a different chef every day. If they did, their menu would change daily, and in all likelihood their customers would be put off by the high degree of variability. Of course, there will be the odd diner who enjoys the sheer unpredictability of this approach, but the majority of people will prefer to know what they are getting.

It is plausible that many of these gastronomes will use the train at some point in their lives, perhaps even to travel to their latest culinary experience. Surely they should be able to expect the same approach to consistency in their chosen form of transport?

However, only a brief glance is required at the rail network in the West Midlands to see that this is not currently the case. For example, there are no fewer than six different companies within the WMR area, operating passenger rail services under six different franchise agreements. Between them they operate over 150 stations of varying shapes and sizes. Some of these are staffed, whilst others of a similar size and footfall are not. At these stations call 21 different types of train, with different seating arrangements and on-board facilities. This pluralism is nobody’s fault; it is the consequence of a

system created to increase the diversity of the industry. Indeed, this system has helped to drive record growth in rail travel throughout the West Midlands region. In turn this has contributed to economic development and job creation.

For these reasons, WMR believes that the positive elements of the current system be retained and enhanced. For example, rail devolution will help incentivise Train Operating Companies (TOCs) to be more responsive to the needs of different parts of the network. Indeed, the opposite approach – imposing a rigid uniformity – would be more damaging to the goal of consistently high standard of customer experience and service delivery as it would deny the differing wants and needs of the diverse parts of the region. Rather, the goal is consistency in outcome across operators and across the region. All passengers should be able to expect to have an excellent journey, characterised by a station that was suited to their needs, a train that ran on time and with sufficient space for all travellers, and connectivity with other forms of transport that is intuitive and integrated. This too is a simple maxim, and in the pages that follow WMR hopes to describe how it can be realised.

What will it look like?

The SNV refers to a consistently high standard of customer experience and service delivery across the rail network in the West Midlands, regardless of the identity of the service provider or geographical location. But what does this actually mean to passengers? After all, this concept is being developed for their benefit.

WMR has identified 24 aspects of the passenger experience that relate to the SNV. These can be broadly categorised into seven distinct themes;

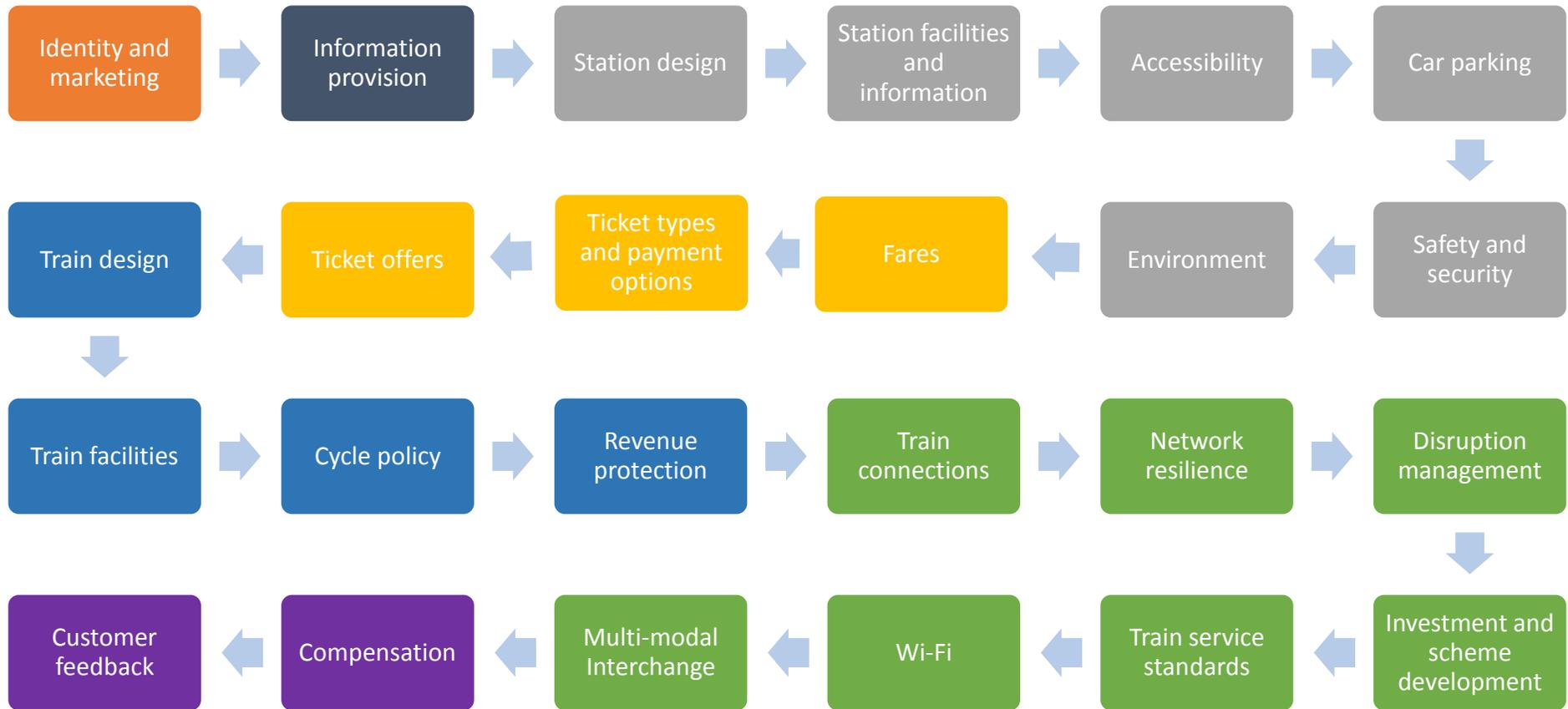
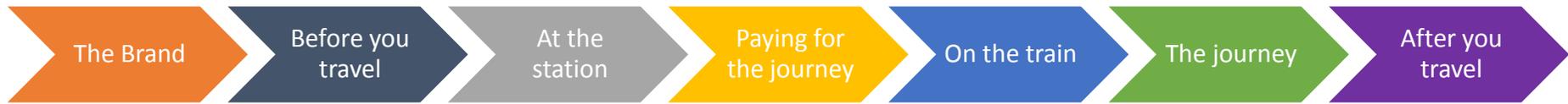
- The Brand
- Before you travel
- At the station
- Paying for the journey
- On the train
- The journey
- After you travel

These aspects are by no means exhaustive, but are meant to represent the most pertinent aspects of the overall rail experience from a passenger's perspective. They are shown schematically over the page.

How will it be Delivered?

The sheer variety of the SNV necessitates a flexible approach to delivery. After all, what will work best for one element of the SNV may not prove as successful in another. However, there remains a need to coordinate activity. This function will be performed by the West Midlands Rail Alliance. This is a body formed of all the key partners in the industry in the region, including passenger and freight operators, the infrastructure provider and maintainer, funders, as well as local authorities. The Rail Alliance will work in a collaborative fashion to identify the requirements and aspirations of the region's rail passengers, and identify what needs to be done to realise the SNV.

One of the first tasks of the Alliance will be to develop detailed action plans for each of the seven themes. These plans will consider funding opportunities, timescales to delivery, as well as ownership of activities. In all cases, it is intended that these plans will be consistent with the principles outlined in this document.



The Brand

Identity and Marketing

Rail devolution will lead to the most significant change to rail services in the West Midlands for a generation, and will be hugely beneficial to the economy and residents alike. The West Midlands Railway brand, suitably and passionately developed and nurtured, has the potential to be an iconic and most visual symbol of this progress, and is an opportunity to create a lasting legacy for the West Midlands.

Not only that, but it has the potential to foster a sense of regional identity that has so far eluded the West Midlands area. The creation of WMR revealed wide disagreement about the use of the term West Midlands and its demonym “West Midlander”. This suggested a region without a strong identity and sense of common purpose. The West Midlands Railway brand can become a uniting symbol for the region, physically and psychologically connecting disparate districts and counties together, subliminally creating a positive sense of belonging that will enable the region to prosper. Therefore, it is a critical component of the SNV.

What would the SNV look like for Identity and Marketing?

- A brand for WMR that can be recognised, remembered, and understood
- A visible WMR presence at all stations within the WMR geography, and on all trains serving the WMR geography
- Staff who are proud represent WMR and act as ambassadors for the brand
- A single network map used by all operators serving the WMR area, including connections to other forms of transport
- Strong marketing by TOCs and partners to promote the brand
- All stations within the WMR geography promoting the WMR brand

How can this be realised?

- By introducing new station branding via Station Design Guide
- Deploying the WMR identity early in Franchise to make it clear something different is happening
- Employing Transport for London (TfL) model of all TOC marketing and communications being developed in conjunction with WMR/Transport for West Midlands (TfWM)
- Providing WMR and TfWM with the necessary brand expertise
- Developing a comprehensive route map that is operator and mode agnostic

Before you Travel

Information Provision

Rail passengers want clear and accurate information about the best route to their destination, including on other modes before and after their train journey; and, during the journey, how their journey is progressing, the cause of any delay, how long a delay is likely to last, and alternative travel options in the event of severe disruption. While there have been enhancements to the information provided to passengers in recent years—since the advent of the internet and the availability of real-time data—there is evidently substantial scope for further improvement. This is what the SNV intends to deliver.

What would the SNV look like for Information Provision?

- Up to date and real time data provided across the WMR area
- One single app for use across the region and across transport modes
- A single point of contact for disability information in the region
- Information displayed in the same ways and to the same standards across operators

How can this be realised?

- Supporting the work of Rail Delivery Group (RDG) to promote a level of consistency across TOC websites and apps
- Using Franchising and Partnership Agreements to influence development of a regional app
- Making connections with organisations such as Hacktrain and Transport Catapult to encourage greater innovation in the region
- Lobbying for an innovation fund in the new West Midlands Franchise
- Providing information at stations defined and delivered by the Station Alliance and Local Delivery Group (LDG)
- WMR and TfWM to participate in the specification of new and refurbished rolling stock
- Lobbying the Department for Transport (DfT) to create a strategic plan for the implementation of extensive and reliable Wi-Fi across the West Midlands region
- Via participation and engagement with Network Rail's Digital Railway project

At the Station

Station Design

Well-planned spaces help move passengers through the station environment, even at busy times, and help to deal with the increasing demand that is inevitable in a growing railway network. But it is also highly desirable for a customer's experience to be welcoming and uplifting, wherever they might be on the network. These are two of the principles that are reflected in the SNVs approach to station design.

What would the SNV look like for Station design?

- Stations integrated into their surroundings
- Clear signposting to and from the station and the surrounding area
- Stations designed around the needs of the area they serve
- Stations support an identity which makes them belong uniquely to WMR
- Encourages more customer focused retailing

How can this be realised?

- Closer collaboration with planning authorities, conservation departments, and civic groups
- Categorisation of stations
- Deployment of the WMR Station Design Guide
- Through WMR/TfWM participation in TOC LDGs
- Through the Station Alliance
- By using local knowledge when planning station designs to ensure that they have the flavour of the area, and of the line
- WMR and TfWM being prepared to challenge the industry where standards used in station design do not enhance the passenger experience and increase costs
- Working with local businesses and tourist attractions

Station Facilities and Information

The range of equipment required to support station buildings is becoming increasingly complex and varied. Facilities have evolved over time and in many cases may vary widely across different stations

in the region. Deriving consistency in outcome across the region is the aspiration of the SNV for station facilities.

What would the SNV look like for Station facilities?

- Station facilities that reflect the needs of the location they serve
- A minimum standard of cleanliness and presentation throughout the region
- Staff available at the times that passengers need them
- Facilities available at the times that they are advertised to be

How can this be realised?

- By incentivising the operator through the Service Quality Regime (SQR)
- Widening the application of the SQR to cover stations operated by other TOCs, achieved via influencing future franchise awards
- Widening Partnership Agreements to include station standards
- By challenging operators on their (ticket office opening hours requirements)
- By working with the industry to challenge staff resourcing levels and practices that are not to the advantage of the passenger
- Categorising stations based on their needs
- Working with partners and the community to encourage further station adoption

Accessibility

WMR is committed to working towards the provision of a more accessible rail network in the West Midlands. WMR recognises that there are wide range of disabilities, whether permanent or temporary, that can affect passengers' ability to fully use the services provided across the region. It is WMR's aim to ensure that as many passengers as possible benefit from increased accessibility, including older people, pregnant ladies, people carrying luggage and those with small children.

What would the SNV look like for Accessibility?

- Consistent approach to assisted travel across the region
- All stations and train services in the region to be accessible for both passengers with hidden and overt disabilities.
- Turn up and go passenger assistance

How can this be realised?

- By making applications to the DfT's Access for All fund, and by supporting applications made by TOCs
- Making accessibility a requirement of any station or on-board improvement scheme
- Making WMR a consultee for any TOC Disabled Person Protection Policies (DPPPs)
- Ensuring that disabled travellers are represented in TOC passenger panels
- Organise and support a non-partisan regional panel for those with disabilities
- Using Franchising and Partnership Agreements to make accessibility training a requirement for all TOCs
- Taking advantage of new technology to allow accessibility to be realised where it may not have been able to have been achieved

Car Parking

Car parking at stations in the West Midlands region is provided by a variety of different operators, each with a different approach to pricing and payment systems. There are 38 TfWM managed sites in the region, providing 8,000 spaces free of charge. At other locations, particularly outside of the TfWM area, facilities are provided on a commercial basis by train companies or their agents, with prices designed to reflect what the market can bear. Consequently passenger's experiences differ markedly across the region. It is this inconsistency that the SNV seeks to address.

What would the SNV look like for Car Parking?

- Consistency in the standards of service at each location, for example, well maintained clearly marked bays, CCTV coverage, and where enforcement is in place uniformity in application
- Ability to reserve car park spaces
- Incentives for those who participate in ride sharing
- Appropriate space provided for disabled parking
- An app that provides real time information on car park availability
- Achievement of Park Mark or similar accreditation for all car parks in region
- Well sited drop off zones with an appropriate waiting time

How can this be realised?

- Through WMR participation in development of TfWM car park strategy
- Supporting the implementation of TfWM car parking policy once agreed
- Challenging industry standards on number of disabled spaces at sites where there is substantial overprovision
- Supporting partners and TOCs in the development of innovations to encourage ride sharing and other electric vehicles
- Working with organisations such as HackTrain to drive innovation in car park management technology

Safety and Security

Safety and security in and around stations is a fundamental need for all passengers and staff so that the free and safe movement of people can be achieved. Maintaining safety and security means eliminating hazards, or mitigating them where they cannot be eliminated. This is the approach that WMR intends to pursue through the SNV.

What would the SNV look like for Safety and Security?

- All stations in region to have Secure Stations Accreditation
- Universal CCTV coverage at stations and on-train
- CCTV monitored constantly by a single source
- Appropriate weatherproofing of surfaces
- Designated space for an emergency vehicle at all stations
- Even lighting across locations
- Design that considers safety and security at an early stage

How can this be realised?

- Developing close relations with the British Transport Police (BTP)
- Facilitating a cross-TOC regional route crime forum
- Using Franchising and Partnership Agreements to incentivise TOCs to provide the necessary training to staff
- Using Franchising and Partnership Agreements to require TOCs to pursue security accreditation
- Encouraging TOCs with stations in region to feed CCTV into TfWM control room

Environment

Although railways still have environmental impacts, they are considerably less than both road and air travel. A substantial shift of passengers and freight from road and air to rail would benefit everyone in the West Midlands region through reduced congestion and less damage to the environment. In addition, rail stations often play a pivotal part in people's experience of cities and through the SNV WMR can take a lead on liaising with other public-transport operators to make urban transport more accessible and environmentally friendly.

What would the SNV look like for Environment?

- A network that contributes to the achievement of sustainable development in the region
- Operators have regard to the effect on the environment of activities connected with the provision of railway services
- The most is made of "multiple use" options for stations with redundant space, both for energy efficiency and community benefit
- Growing proportion of journeys to stations made by sustainable travel

How can this be realised?

- WMR acting as an enabler for change, promoting best practice to foster a create environment in the region
- Targets for reducing emissions and increasing sustainability through franchising and Partnership Agreements
- Agreed environmental standards for stations in the region
- Using the West Midlands Station Alliance and LDG to encourage use of sustainable materials
- Encouraging station adoption and Community Rail Partnerships
- TOCs providing training to ensure that existing buildings are used and managed as efficiently as possible
- Facilitating joint working between transport modes to reduce reliance on car for journeys to stations
- Making applications, and support local authority partners in doing likewise, for investment in improving access to stations
- Lobbying for further electrification in the region

Paying for your Journey

Fares

Fares regulation is important and plays a key role in helping to keep rail travel affordable for a wide group of people. But it can also feel that the current system of regulation does not always manage

local demand in the most efficient way either for the commuter high-peak or for off-peak long distance travel.

As part of the devolution agenda that has created WMR, the Government has provided a means to transfer responsibility for setting local fares. This could give WMR responsibility for determining the right balance between fares levels and the amount of funds available for improving rail services, with central Government responsible for ensuring that the budget allocated to a local body was fair and reasonable overall.

What would the SNV look like for Fares?

- Choice leads to complexity, which requires excellent communication to passengers
- Cheapest fares always offered first
- Common peak restrictions across all operators in the region
- Common range of fare types across the region
- Fare levels set at a level appropriate to the market
- Extension of zonal season tickets to reflect the region's growing catchment area
- Reduction in the number of single operator fares

How can this be realised?

- Using WMR's fares basket powers to develop a new fares structure in conjunction with the new Franchisee
- Using Partnership Agreements and Franchise competitions to influence other TOCs
- Undertaking a comprehensive fare review of rail, bus and metro
- Lobbying DfT and RDG to provide TOCs with open access to rail fares data which is currently a barrier to the development of more innovative fares

Ticket Types and Payment Options

According to research conducted by Transport Focus, making ticket buying easier and more user-friendly is one of the most important things the rail industry could do. Where barriers to ticket buying have been reduced, the results have been impressive. On Virgin Trains West Coast for example, 37% of all ticket sales are now by online transaction. This is something that the SNV wishes to encourage.

What would the SNV look like for Ticket Types and Payment Options?

- Improved ease of purchase by expanding the channels available to purchase tickets, such as smartcards, barcode, contactless etc
- All TOCs in region offer similar payment options and ticket types
- Widescale adoption of the Swift smart card product across region
- Improved functionality of TVMs in region, and capable of retailing all fares
- New ways of paying for your journey, with expansion in the outlets

How can this be realised?

- Lobbying for the relaxation/recasting of existing regulations rules to reduce barriers to entry and broaden scope of ticket retailing
- Through the Swift delivery team attending the Rail Alliance
- Using focus groups and other engagement activities to understand what users in the region want from ticket payment options
- Participating in DfT smart ticketing trials
- Influencing upcoming Franchise competitions to include initiatives around ease of purchase

Ticket Offers

What would the SNV look like for Ticket Offers?

- Extended window for booking Advance Purchase fares that is much closer to the actual point of departure
- Offers designed to attract people to the region
- Joint ticketing promotions between rail and regional attractions
- A Loyalty scheme for rail users in the region, that is TOC agnostic
- Web only offers also redeemable at stations and other locations where tickets can be purchased

How can this be realised?

- Through the Rail Alliance bringing operators and businesses together
- By developing partnerships between transport providers and attractions/tourist information groups
- Using Partnership Agreements and re-franchising to commit operators to ticket offers
- Through the exercise of the WMR/TfWM fares basket powers

On the Train

Train Design

From the passenger's perspective, trains need to be truly inclusive. The design has to consider the needs of both commuters and recreational users, those travelling alone, those wishing to use the journey to catch up on work, as well as families with small children. This supports the change in working arrangements meaning 'out of the office' no longer exists as people are expected to be as productive on the move as in the office. From a staff perspective, the train has to be a safe,

comfortable and pleasant place to work. There also needs to be flexibility in the number of ways to account for changing working practices. These are the principles that the SNV will seek to encourage.

What would the SNV look like for Train Design?

- All trains in the region to have as a minimum:
 - Full accessibility compliance
 - Appropriate seating for the market served
 - Suitable capacity for the market served
 - Comfortable seats
 - Visible on train staff presence
 - Cup holders
 - Seamless train platform interface
 - High standard of on-board information
 - Fast Wi-Fi with generous and consistent data allowances
 - Network maps
 - Doors wider enough for prompt boarding and alighting

How can this be realised?

- Working with the industry to challenge design standards that are detrimental to the passenger
- Working with the new franchisee on the specification of new and refurbished rolling stock
- Using the Rail Alliance to drive consistency in provision of on-board information
- Through re-franchising, influence the specification of rolling stock on other franchises
- Facilitating customer feedback sessions on rolling stock design

Train Facilities

Trains should provide facilities that are commensurate to the service they are providing. However, passengers should expect that basic hygiene factors will always be met, regardless of where they are in the region. These are the two values that guide the SNV's thinking on train facilities.

What would the SNV look like for Train Facilities?

- High standard of cleanliness inside and out
- Customer information systems (CIS) that provide connectional and loading information
- All fleets operating in region to be fully accessible
- Catering available on longer distance services
- Clearly marked and enforced priority seating and wheelchair/buggy areas
- Sufficient luggage space for long distance services and those serving Birmingham Airport

How can this be realised?

- Through the SQR regime providing incentives for a high quality on-board environment
- The Rail Alliance advancing the service quality concept across the region
- Influencing future franchises to embed SQR regime across region

Cycle Policy

There is considerable difference when it comes to taking bikes on trains. Each of the train companies serving the region has approached the issue in a slightly different way. For example, whilst full sized bikes are not allowed on to trains in the peak hours on Chiltern services, they are on London Midland.

Great strides have been made in recent years to make the rail network more bike friendly, but given that sixty per cent of people live within 15 minutes cycle ride of a railway station, but less than 2% of train trips start with a bike ride to the station, there is still much that can be done.

What would the SNV look like for Cycle Policy?

- Consistent cycle carriage conditions across TOCs and routes
- Fair and proportionate enforcement across all TOCs
- Secure cycle parking facilities at all locations
- Designated spaces on trains for fold up bikes

How can this be realised?

- By the Rail Alliance leading on the development of a cycle carriage policy for the region
- Via the Rail Alliance establishing enforcement protocols for the policy
- By WMR/TfWM assisting TOCs in submissions for funding for cycle improvements
- Through TfWM providing assistance to TOCs through its sustainable travel teams

Revenue Protection

The industry as a whole loses around £400m a year through fare evasion, and in urban areas where trains are busy and there are short distances between stations, it can be very difficult for revenue protection staff to check every ticket. The feeling that someone else is profiting from your honesty is irksome to the majority of passengers, who do pay for their travel. Tackling this issue will likely have a significant impact on passenger's perceptions of quality and value for money, and so it is one of the components of the SNV.

What would the SNV look like for Revenue Protection?

- Consistent revenue protection rules across the region
- Common application of the revenue protection rules across the region
- Pro-active revenue protection with visible staff providing a deterrent to offenders and a reassuring presence to those who have paid
- Automatic ticket gates at all busy stations, in use during operational hours

How can this be realised?

- Improvements in ease of buying tickets to reduce instances of people making mistakes
- By TVMs being capable of vending all ticket types
- By making WMR a consultee for any TOC penalty fare policies
- Using Partnership Agreements and re-franchising to influence the revenue protection requirements for new TOCs
- By the Rail Alliance coordinating the development and application of a regional revenue fare approach
- Challenge established working practices to enable ticket gates to be used at all hours

The Journey

Train Connections

Train to train connectivity is important to the region as it provides passengers with better travel options to more destinations. The regional economy cuts across rail routes, and so connecting lines together more effectively is a vital part of improving the productivity of the area.

What would the SNV look like for Train Connections?

- An agreed and consistently applied regional policy on connections, including minimum connection times
- Clearly communicated passenger guidance on holding connections
- Connectional policies that are appropriate to the journey being provided, with a more generous policy for low frequency routes and evening services
- Clear signage at stations to aid passengers making connections
- Greater alignment of bus and rail timetables to enhance connectivity between transport modes

How can this be realised?

- Through the Rail Alliance bringing operators and Network Rail together to develop a regional approach to connections
- Through closer collaboration with Network Rail, who validate operator's timetables
- By challenging Network Rail on issues that affect connectivity, such as speed restrictions, leafall restrictions, route opening hours, and train planning rules
- Via the Station Alliance providing direction to help make changing platforms at stations more intuitive

Network Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability to provide and maintain an acceptable level of service in the face of faults and challenges to normal operation. With HS2 and the rebuilding of Birmingham's motorway box are all expected to be delivered within the next decade, and ensuring the region's rail network is prepared will be a key priority for the SNV.

What would the SNV look like for Network Resilience?

- Resilience plans developed for the region in conjunction with all TOCs
- Increased availability on rail network to ensure trips displaced from the road network can be accommodated
- Expanded park and ride sites to cope with greater railheading
- Open data feeds from operators to help passengers make smarter journey choices
- Proactive and consistent messaging to all passengers in the region

How can this be realised?

- By creating an integrated control centre for rail across the region, and look to integrated with bus, metro and highway controllers
- Through the Station Alliance leading a drive move towards multi-modal variable message signing across the region
- Via WMR/TfWM coordinating customer communications across the region's rail routes in the style of TfL
- By working with TOCs to challenge existing working practices that prevent staff from being more flexible
- By working with all partners to realise seamless ticket compatibility across the region, for example Swift accepted on all transport modes

Disruption Management

We know from research that how train companies deal with delays is the biggest drawer of public dissatisfaction. Most passengers accept that things do go wrong from time to time, it is how the railway deals with it that is critical. Today it is widely accepted that at times of disruption, the operator and infrastructure provider should work together not only to rectify the problem, but keep customers advised. The SNV creates opportunities for further progress to be made on this topic.

What would the SNV look like for Disruption Management?

- Joint approach by all TOCs in the region
- All information to passengers presented in a clear, consistent, and regular manner
- A "One Truth" basis to all communications to ensure that all sources give the same information about the prevailing situation and the planned steps towards restoring the service
- Where there are complementary transport modes, cross-modal cover to be provided during disruption

How can this be realised?

- By convening a working group for planned disruption as part of the Rail Alliance
- Agreeing through the Rail Alliance contingency plans for disruption in the region
- WMR chairing multi-operator "hot wash-ups" in the 48 hours following a major incident
- WMR becoming a consultee for all TOC Passenger Information During Disruption (PIDD) policies
- WMR/TfWM coordinating customer messages as per the TfL model

Investment and Scheme Development

Investment in rail is vital; the UK rail network is the fastest growing in Europe, with operators carrying twice as many passengers as they did 20 years ago. Indeed, in the West Midlands Metropolitan area, rail patronage has increased by 135% since 2000, and by over 70% in the last 10 years. This demand is evidenced by the fact that in 2015/16, Birmingham New Street saw over 44m passenger journeys, making it the busiest station outside of London, and the eighth busiest in the entire country. This demand can only be met through investment in the network, delivered by well-considered and managed schemes.

What would the SNV look like for Investment and Scheme Development?

- There is one voice directing investment in the region's rail network
- Investment will be in schemes that passengers want and need
- Schemes will take into account their environmental impact
- Projects are delivered on time and to budget
- TOCs and other partners to consider each other during development and delivery

How can this be realised?

- Working with partners to identify opportunities for development and investment in areas and markets where rail is best placed to support regional outcomes
- Prioritising investment in schemes that add value to the region and to its users
- Taking advantage of Network Rail's renewals programme to minimise the cost of rail enhancements
- WMR/TfWM supporting industry efforts to lower project costs and reduce project complexity
- WMR/TfWM challenging Network Rail and contractors to ensure that projects deliver the right outcomes at the right price
- WMR/TfWM using industry consultations to challenge standards that are not in the passenger interest and push up costs
- Ensuring appropriate representation on project boards

Train Service Standards

All of the timetables in operation at present in the West Midlands region are specified by the Department of Transport under the terms of each respective franchise agreement. The franchisee is required to operate at least the minimum level of service specified in the franchise agreement. This includes such things as service frequency, first and last trains, journey times and calling patterns. Operators may provide additional services but these are at their own commercial risk.

As these Franchises have been let over time and often without reference to one another, differences in train service standards have emerged. Similarly, the standards do not always match regional aspirations. Birmingham Airport contributes £1.1bn in GVA and supports 20,800 full time jobs. However, rail services start after the first flight of the day, and end before the last, meaning that potential of this economic engine is not being fully realised. These are challenges that the SNV wishes to address.

What would the SNV look like for Train Service Standards?

- Consistency in service proposition at key stations, such that passengers will have a frequency that is memorable and reliable
- Earlier services and later services to and from key regional centres
- Trains that meet the first and last flights from Birmingham International Airport
- Services on Boxing Day

How can this be realised?

- Through the Rail Investment Strategy and Rail Alliance
- By challenging the industry on costs that limit these aspirations, such as track access and station access
- Working with operators to challenge inefficient working practices
- Working with Network Rail and the industry to develop a more efficient way to undertake maintenance in order to keep routes open for longer
- Using Franchise reletting to enhance the service levels specified in Franchise Agreements

Wi-Fi

In today's world, the provision of Wi-Fi is increasingly taken for granted. Consequently, a growing percentage of train companies, particularly those that operate along commuter routes, provide Wi-Fi connectivity free of charge in order to attract new customers and keep existing ones happy. A high quality Wi-Fi proposition, with seamless connectivity between carriage, station and onward connection will likely become the benchmark for excellence, and something WMR is keen to promote through the SNV.

What would the SNV look like for Wi-Fi?

- Wi-Fi is offered free of charge by all operators in the region
- Wi-Fi is seamless between the train and station
- Generous and consistent data limits and high speeds throughout
- Elimination of signal black spots
- Integration with Wi-Fi provided by other transport modes

How can this be realised?

- Via the Rail Alliance coordinating joint Wi-Fi procurement and delivery
- Using re-franchising to secure commitments to seamless Wi-Fi and connectivity with other operators
- Through WMR/TfWM facilitating trials of latest connectivity technology

Multi-Modal Interchange

Improved public transport interchange hubs that enable better integration of the West Midland's public transport are a key element of the SNV. Integration is about making public transport more

attractive to existing and potential passengers and about how the rail network, including interchanges, can contribute to the achievement of broader economic, social, and environmental objectives.

What would the SNV look like for Multi-Modal Interchange?

- Real time information about other transport modes provided at rail stations and vice versa
- Clear signage provided to other transport modes from stations and vice versa
- Connections between rail and other forms of transport are intuitive
- Route maps that show all transport options together to assist with journey planning

How can this be realised?

- Working with bus companies to enable data feeds to be shared with TOCs
- Supporting the rail and bus industries in the creation of simple ticket offers with add-ons for bus/train/metro combination journeys
- Standardising branding across all public transport in the WMR region
- Facilitating joint working between TOCs and bus companies

After you Travel

Compensation

Rail passengers often struggle to understand how the complex compensation system works, confused by the fact that there are different compensation arrangements for passengers and, separately, for train companies (from Network Rail). On a national level, this has become particularly acute over the past 18 months as passengers on several train services in the south east have experienced delays and overcrowding due to major engineering and redesign works at busy London stations and other issues. The SNV has an aspiration to achieve a fair and proportional approach to compensation that can be applied across the region regardless of the identity of the operator or party at fault.

What would the SNV look like for Compensation?

- All TOCs in the region to offer the same compensation arrangements
- Compensation to be made as simple as possible, with automation the method being aspired to

How can this be realised?

- Through re-franchising to standardise compensation regimes across the region
- By influencing the DfT's Delay Repay compensation policy
- Through TfWM and WMR publicising compensation arrangements across the region

Customer Feedback

There are two stages to making a complaint about rail services; the first is to complain direct to the train operator TOC and if their response is unsatisfactory, only then to contact the relevant passenger watchdog. Under the existing arrangements, TOCs set their own standards for responding to feedback. The SNV envisages a system where all users can expect their correspondence to be treated in the same way, and to be able to contact each operator through the same medium.

What would the SNV look like for Customer Feedback?

- All TOCs in region to offer the same extensive range of ways to contact them
- Passengers to be able to expect their correspondence to be dealt with to the same timescales and quality regardless of the identity of the company who is dealing with it

How can this be realised?

- Establishing a community rail forum for the region to gain feedback outside of the normal channels
- Via the Rail Alliance coordinating standardisation in correspondence response times and standards
- Through WMR/TfWM becoming a consultee for all TOC Complaints Handling Policies (CHPs)

Conclusion

For WMR, the idea of a single unified rail network in the West Midlands, characterised by excellence in customer service and delivery, is an instinctive one. However, the fact that there are at least 24 areas where its effect is required to be felt, means that it will take time to realise.

That said, the Government's devolution of rail management responsibilities means that time is something that WMR has on its side. Between the award of the West Midlands Franchise and the opening of HS2, all of the franchises that operate in the West Midlands region will have been re-let. Each competition creates a unique opportunity to bring the network closer together. WMR's involvement in the specification of the West Midlands Franchise means that it is well placed to influence future specifications, and thus advance the concept of the SNV.

In the meantime, the formation of a Rail Alliance will greatly assist the creation of the SNV. The Alliance will include all of the key industry partners involved in passenger rail journeys in the region, including journey planning, the trip to and from the station, at the station, and on the train. The Alliance will work jointly to identify the requirements and aspirations of the region's rail passengers and what needs be delivered to achieve the objectives of the SNV. It will put policies and processes in place to identify funding, provide/deliver the required improvements and measure progress through continual liaison with customers and partners.

As the Alliance matures, and re-franchises alters the landscape of the rail network in the West Midlands, the SNV will become more and more a reality. A consistently excellent level of service for all rail users in the region, regardless of where they live and which company they travel with, can only be a good thing for the people of the West Midlands. Therefore, WMR is proud that the SNV is one of its four key areas of activity, and looks forward to making this ambition a reality.