

Sustainable Transport Group, Upper Calder Valley Renaissance

Meeting at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Mytholmroyd on Monday 30th June 2008 at 7.30pm to discuss proposed changes to Rail Services

- Survey in Mytholmroyd on Wednesday 18th and Thursday 19th June 2008 of rail passengers from 6.30am-9.15am and from 3.15pm-7.15pm. (This means passengers travelling out with these hours and days of the week have not been surveyed. This is not, therefore, a representative sample of all persons using the train services at Mytholmroyd station.)
- Chose Mytholmroyd because it was the easiest to access for our volunteers.
- But do remember the situation facing passengers at Walsden or Sowerby Bridge. Walsden, in particular, is facing the largest proportional cut in the number of trains under these proposals and which has a similar non-Metro card usage.
- Very good response rate (of around 60%). In fact people were asking for questionnaires!
- However, perhaps not surprisingly, few questionnaires returned from the dozens of school pupils who use the service.

First the figures, then a brief summary of some of the views of the people who completed questionnaires:

110 questionnaires returned:

- 24 (22%) from passengers coming into Mytholmroyd (4 (4%) of these from Walsden), employed at Sweet & Maxwell and some from Calder High School.
- 86 (78%) leaving Mytholmroyd: 64 (75% of those leaving Mytholmroyd) were travelling East and 22 (25%) travelling West. 33 people (38% of those leaving Mytholmroyd) were travelling to Halifax or Bradford.

103 were travelling to work, 5 for school/college/training and 2 for leisure (reflecting the time of day the survey was carried out)

- Over half take the same train every day both into work and returning and half of those going east use trains that will be cut under the Northern Rail proposals (7.36/8.37/9.36am).
- The possibility of using a connecting train from Sowerby Bridge or Bradford was dismissed by 39 of those travelling east, while 12 said they might use it.

- The reasons given were: inconvenient, unreliable connections, hassle, extra time, overcrowded, travelling with a buggy, silly for such a short journey and the need to take an earlier train.
- 78% of the respondents said they thought their travel arrangements would be affected by the proposed changes; 12% said their travel arrangements would not be and 10% didn't know.
- 41% of respondents would consider not using the train and a further 24.5% said that they maybe would consider not using the train and 29% who would continue to use the train.
- When asked whether they would consider using Hebden Bridge station, 31% said 'yes', 23% said 'maybe' and 40% said 'no'.
- The method of travel which people would be used to get to Hebden Bridge Station was: car 25%; bus 16%; walk 11%; cycle 6% (some people mentioned that they might use more than one mode of travel)

So, now onto what people said in their questionnaires:

There was considerable strength of feeling expressed about the changes:

- Absurd; Alarming; Disgrace; Idiotic; Madness; Outrageous; Pointless; Ridiculous;

Many people questioned the ideas behind the proposed changes. The comments noted below are summaries of what a few of the rail users said:

- Bradford to Manchester: 69 minutes now, 59 minutes in the future 'is that really worth it?
- No one 'impressed by the 59 minutes from Bradford to Manchester spiel'
- Unmanned station so Northern Rail don't know what the passenger count is
- Madness to improve the service at the expense of others
- The train from Bradford to Manchester is empty train by the time it gets to Todmorden
- Little regard for Walsden
- By using newer faster trains travel times could be reduced
- "Short term (lack of) thinking"
- 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'
- "The 'improvement' of the service seems ridiculous"

There were four broad headings under which the objections and concerns were expressed:

Personal:

- ‘greatly increase my daily commute’
- ‘affect me in a massive way’
- ‘need to change my hours of work’
- ‘consider giving up my job’
- ‘we moved to Mytholmroyd because of the convenient train links’
- nursery/child care much more difficult (as would have to leave before the nursery opens)
- removes the flexibility that the service currently offers

Environmental:

- Employer asking for green travel but its being taken away
- More people will use their cars/stop using the train
- We need to encourage the use of local train stations
- Not very green and environmentally friendly
- Doesn’t make sense in terms of sustainability and economic progress
- ‘how sustainable is this?’

Economic/Regeneration:

- Needs to be more trains with more carriages to meet demand
- Affect local economy
- First stage in erosion of service to Mytholmroyd
- Reduce passengers and close the Station in the future?
- This proposal will ruin the town
- Will affect schools, businesses and commuter
- Mytholmroyd has a big working population
- Passenger numbers doubled in last few years
- Mytholmroyd is the poor relation again

Operational:

- If cancellation, possibility of having to wait up to an hour for next train
- Delays/cancellations every other day
- Already overcrowded with half hour service
- Missing connections

My thanks must go to all the one hundred and ten people who gave their time and effort to complete a questionnaire. Without them there would be no survey! Also, many thanks to the volunteers from our group in handing out questionnaires.

Lesley Mackay
 Chair
 Sustainable Transport Group
 Upper Calder Valley Renaissance

30th June 2008