



SENUG RESPONSE TO NORTHERN RAILWAY DRAFT MAY 2018 TIMETABLE

For the MetroCentre – Newcastle – Morpeth – Chathill Line

Status: Final: 22nd May 2017

This response is divided into 3 sections: Section A is a summary of the new timetable, Section B is the problems or unmet aspirations with the proposed solution that SENUG requests to solve (8 requests in total), and Section C are other observations, for which no specific action is suggested.

SECTION A: SUMMARY OF NEW TIMETABLE PROPOSALS

Monday to Saturday Northbound

- Services depart Newcastle at 05:55 (to Chathill), 08:20 then at xx:20 until 17:20, 17:56 (to Chathill), 18:20, 20:20, 21:20 and 22:20. **There is no service at 19:20.**
- From the 10:20 service onward, (excluding the 17:56 from Newcastle) these trains start from MetroCentre at xx.09 also calling Dunston at xx:12 and arriving Newcastle at xx.18, 2 minutes before departure.
- The 22:09 from MetroCentre / 22:20 from Newcastle does not call at Manors, arriving Cramlington and Morpeth a minute earlier
- The 20:09 from MetroCentre / 20:20 from Newcastle starts from Hexham at 19:44 also calling at Prudhoe at 19:56

Monday to Saturday Southbound

- Services depart Morpeth at 07:58 and Cramlington at 08:07 then hourly until 21:58, then 22:55 from Morpeth. Arrival in Newcastle is xx:23 until 20:23 then 21:22, 22:21 and 23:17
- The services from Chathill are the 07:20 and 19:20 (Morpeth 07:58 and 19:58)
- All services continue through to Carlisle but with a roughly alternate skip-stop pattern between MetroCentre and Carlisle except the 21:58 which terminates Hexham and the 22:25 which terminates Newcastle. However, there are no direct return services from Carlisle

- Only the 07:58 calls at Dunston, there are no other direct outward journeys to Dunston to match the return service
- The 20:58, 21:58 and 22:55 from Morpeth do not call at Manors

Sundays

- From Newcastle 08:20, 09:20, 10:57, 12:57, 14:57, 16:57, 18:57 and 21:05.
- Apart from the first two trains, all services start from MetroCentre at xx:38 but with a 9 minute wait at Newcastle, except for the 20:38 where the wait at Newcastle is 17 minutes
- From Morpeth at 08:50, 09:50, 11:50, 13:50, 15:50, 17:50, 19:50 (all of which terminate at MetroCentre) then 21:40 (terminates Newcastle).

SECTION B: REQUESTS FOR CHANGES FROM CURRENT DRAFT

1. Northbound Service from Newcastle required at 19:20

Problem: There are clockface departures from Newcastle to Morpeth from 08:20 to 22:20 except 19:20, creating a 2-hour gap between 18:20 and 20:20 which needs to be plugged.

Solution: SENRUG requests the 17:50 from Carlisle is retimed from Dunston to match that of the other hourly services on the route, giving arrival at Newcastle at 19:18, and then extended to depart Newcastle at 19:20, Manors 19:22, Cramlington 19:33, Morpeth 19:41 (all as per clockface).

There is no point in this service returning from Morpeth at this time as the unit returning from Chathill forms the 19:58 from Morpeth. SENRUG therefore suggests this train is further extended to Pegswood (approx 19:44), Widdrington (approx 19:50) and Acklington (approx 19:57) giving a 2nd choice of return commuter trains to these destinations. The train would reverse at Wooden Gate siding / crossover.

An ideal return time could then be depart Acklington 20:11, Widdrington 20:18, Pegswood 20:25, Morpeth 20:28, Cramlington 20:37, Manors 20:48 and terminating Newcastle at 20:50 to give an additional evening southbound service, or run empty to Heaton depot.

2. Southbound arrivals times at Newcastle.

Problem 1: The proposal to re-time all hourly services to arrive at Newcastle at xx:23 (currently xx:15) means that in most cases, they will no longer connect with the VTEC departures to London, which vary between xx:25 and xx:33 (8 minutes connection time required at Newcastle).

Problem 2: Morning peak arrivals in Newcastle at 08:23 instead of 08:21 and 09:23 instead of 09:14 might cause problems for commuters with an 08:30 or 09:30 start time at work.

Solution: SENRUG requests southbound services should be retimed a couple of minutes earlier so that in most hours during the day they will connect with the southbound VTEC

departure. This means slightly less stop-over time at Morpeth and longer wait time at Newcastle, if the onward times to Carlisle are to remain unchanged.

3: Northbound service to Chathill

Problem: The single evening service for commuters to / from Pegswood, Widdrington, Acklington and Chathill, which currently departs Newcastle at 17:38 is proposed to be put back by 18 minutes until 17:56. As it was a SENRUG initiative that previously re-timed this service from 17:00 to 17:38 (and provoked some negative feedback), this might cause further consternation to those few commuters using the service. However, journey times are speeded up with new arrival times at Pegswood (18:20), Widdrington (18:26) and Acklington (18:33) only being 8 mins later than current, and Chathill (18:54) only 5 mins later than current.

Solution: Whilst the proposed re-timing is more efficient, cutting journey time, there may be virtue in retaining the existing times for present (service looped north of Morpeth), until it is possible to add some further services to Pegswood and Widdrington to give a choice of trains, or at least keeping both opportunities available and carry out further consultations with north of Morpeth commuters (which SENRUG is willing to assist in).

4: Sunday northbound wait time at Newcastle

Problem: Sunday northbound services are proposed to depart MetroCentre at xx:38, with a 9 minute wait at Newcastle. The earlier draft Sunday service timetable for December 2017 shared at the Northern Stakeholder Event on 3rd March 2017 showed an xx:45 departure from MetroCentre with same departure time at Newcastle as now proposed, so presumably a 2 minute rather than 9 minute wait at Newcastle.

Solution: SENRUG requests the departure time from MetroCentre remains at xx:45 and the wait time at Newcastle reduced from 9 to 2 minutes.

5: Manors

Problem: Some late evening trains do not stop at Manors for no apparent reason, but disrupt the otherwise clockface timetable.

Solution: Calls at Manors should be inserted on the 22:09 MetroCentre to Morpeth (with Cramlington departure moved to 22:33), the 20:58 Morpeth to Carlisle, the 21:58 Morpeth to Hexham and the 22:55 Morpeth to Newcastle.

6: Earlier Morning Train

Problem: There is still no southbound service from Cramlington before 08:07, and Morpeth passengers have no service between the 07:11 (VTEC) and the proposed 07:58 (Northern); these gaps being during the crucial morning peak period.

Solution: An earlier service should leave Newcastle at 06:50, calling at Manors, Cramlington and Morpeth, then form a return service from Morpeth at 07:28 and Cramlington 07:37 (also calling at Manors)

7: Later Evening Train

Problem: Latest departure from Newcastle is still only 22:18; there had been earlier discussion about a service leaving close to midnight.

Solution: SENRUG requests a later train departing Newcastle at 23:48, calling at Manors, Cramlington and Morpeth then returning empty to Heaton depot.

8: Marketing Opportunity Created by Direct Morpeth – Carlisle Services

Opportunity: Through services from Morpeth to Carlisle means that SENRUG could promote leisure travel on the Settle - Carlisle line, (using the direct CrossCountry service from Leeds to Morpeth departing Leeds 19:08 for the final leg of the journey). However the North East Round Robin ticket validity excludes Cramlington and Morpeth (*despite these locations clearly being in the North East*) - see http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/static/documents/promotions/North_East_Round_Robin.pdf

Solution: Extend the validity of the North East Round Robin ticket to include Manors, Cramlington and Morpeth.

SECTION C: OTHER OBSERVATIONS

- Morning commuters from Chathill will depart 12 mins later (07:20 instead of 07:08) but arrive at Newcastle just 2 minutes later, shortening journey times by 10 minutes.
- The xx:20 departures from Newcastle compared with xx:15 at present may permit unofficial interconnection with the incoming TPE arrival at xx:15 (but as the minimum required connection time at Newcastle is 8 minutes such connections will not be guaranteed or scheduled on through tickets).
- SENRUG would like to see at least one further service each peak hour extended to Pegswood and Widdrington, to give a genuine choice to commuters from these stations.
- Returning nightshift workers previously catching the 08:02 from Newcastle will now need to wait until 08:20.
- The 8 Sunday services each way per day as per franchise requirement of 6 are welcome.
- The evening services with last departure from Newcastle at 22:20 are welcome - though the gap at 19:20 must be plugged (see request #1) and an even later last departure from Newcastle close to midnight would be appreciated (See request #7)
- It is frustrating there will be a direct through service to Carlisle outward but no direct return service (but see request #1)
- It is a pity all outward journeys to MetroCentre call at Dunston but returns do not, meaning no market for travel from Morpeth line to Dunston can be established.

End