

Marple Area Train Counts 2016

Summary of Findings

1. Introduction

The Friends of Marple Station and Friends of Rose Hill Station both undertook passenger boarding and alighting counts during November 2016. These counts provide information on current levels of rail usage at the two stations in Marple. This paper summarises the way that the work was undertaken and sets out the main results. It also provides a comparison with the previous survey undertaken on similar dates in 2015, although the significance of any changes should not be over-estimated given day to day variations in demand and service performance.

2. Survey Method

The following information was collected during the survey:

- Passengers boarding each train during the survey period;
- Passengers alighting each train during the survey period;
- Train punctuality;
- Number of cycles taken on and off trains;
- Periodic counts of car park utilisation (Rose Hill only).

The surveys were undertaken as follows:

- Rose Hill – Thursday 3rd November from first to last train;
- Marple – Wednesday 23rd November from first train to 19.45.

For comparability, the results below relate to the period up to 19.45 (there is only one arrival and departure at Rose Hill after this time). There was no severe weather or significant disruption to services on either survey day and the results should therefore be reasonably representative of typical weekdays.

3. Results – Overall Usage

In total, 2305 passengers boarded or alighted at the two stations during the period up to 19.45, with a total of 1228 boarding and 1077 alighting during this period, thus showing a relatively high level of rail usage. There has been a 1% increase in total passengers since the previous survey in 2015.

In total, 151 more passengers boarded than alighted. 16 passengers alighted and 1 boarded the only train at Rose Hill after 19.45. In order for the number of passengers to balance over the day, 136 passengers would need to return to Marple after 19.45 (plus any passengers who board after this time). This implies that there may be significant numbers of passengers alighting at Marple after the survey period.

The great majority of passengers were travelling to or from the Manchester direction, with only 76 (3%) travelling to or from the Sheffield direction.

Table 1 summarises the to/from Manchester results by time of day.

Table 1: Manchester Direction Trips by Time of Day

Period	Boarding	Alighting	Total
Before 07.00	64	3	67
07.00 – 09.29	709	106	815
09.30 - 15.59	318	226	544
16.00 – 18.59	81	619	700
19.00 – 19.45	8	95	103
Total	1180	1049	2229

The table shows strong peak demand to Manchester in the morning, returning in the evening. Contra-peak travel to and from Marple is relatively low, but increased by 29% compared to 2015. While off peak demand is lower than the peak, it remains significant. Interestingly more people board than alight during the inter peak period. This implies that they are returning in the evening peak or later. Compared to 2015, station usage has increased in the morning peak and inter peak and has reduced in the evening peak. This may be partly due to the longer term impact of imposing peak fares during the evening peak.

Table 2 shows demand in the two peak hours.

Table 2 Manchester Direction Peak Hour Demand

Period	Boarding	Alighting	Total
07.31 – 08.30	422	59	481
17.01 – 18.00	34	319	353

Overall, more passengers travel in the morning peak hour than the evening peak hour. The imbalance between the 2 peaks has increased since 2015. In 2016 36% more passengers travelled in the morning peak hour than in the evening peak hour, compared to 11% in 2015.

Table 3 shows total usage by station.

Table 3: Manchester Direction Trips by Time of Day and Station

Period	Marple	Rose Hill	Marple Share (%)
Before 07.00	57	10	85
07.00 – 09.29	524	291	64
09.30 - 15.59	298	246	55
16.00 – 18.59	512	188	73
19.00 – 19.45	82	21	80
Total	1473	756	66

Overall, more passengers use Marple than Rose Hill in each period, although the difference is greater in the peak than the off peak. Reasons for Rose Hill's better performance in the off peak may include a more equal distribution of services (2 trains/ hour from each station) and better car parking availability at Rose Hill. Compared to 2015, there has been a 4% reduction at Marple and a 12% increase at Rose Hill.

Examining results by direction, the only period where Rose Hill had more passengers than Marple was inbound in the morning peak. This may be due to students travelling to Marple Hall High School and Marple 6th Form College.

Trains where 50 or more passengers boarded or alighted are shown below.

Table 4: Busiest Trains – Boarding and Alighting

Station	Train Time	Number of Passengers
Boarding		
Marple	07.45	118
Marple	07.59	105
Marple	07.22	60
Rose Hill	07.41	57
Marple	08.10	50
Rose Hill	08.18	50
Alighting		
Marple	17.11	73
Marple	16.44	71
Marple	18.11	59
Marple	17.30	56
Marple	17.38	55
Rose Hill	17.49	55

At Marple, there is a marked peak between 07.45 and 08.00 with over 100 passengers boarding each of the two trains at this time. The busiest train from Rose Hill was the 07.41 service with 57 passengers. The number of passengers alighting at both stations in the evening peak is more even with typically 50 – 70 using each service. The 16.44 and 17.11 services were significantly busier than in 2015.

As noted above, demand in the Sheffield direction is much lower than towards Manchester. Results by period are shown below.

Table 5: Sheffield Direction Boarding and Alighting

Period	Boarding	Alighting	Total
Before 07.00	0	0	0
07.00 – 09.29	19	5	24
09.30 - 15.59	17	9	26
16.00 – 18.59	12	9	21
19.00 – 19.45	0	5	5
Total	48	28	76

The low demand may be partly a consequence of the relatively poor service in the Sheffield direction (hourly in peak periods and two hourly off peak, with only a limited evening service). As the survey was carried out on a weekday in November, the number of leisure trips to stations in the Peak District National Park could be expected to be low.

4. Results – Cycles

In total, 43 cycles were recorded during the survey, 33 at Marple and 10 at Rose Hill. The distribution by time period is set out below. In 2015, 34 cycles were counted at Marple (this information was not collected at Rose Hill).

Table 6: Cycles on Trains by Period

Period	Boarding	Alighting	Total
Before 07.00	0	0	0
07.00 – 09.29	14	3	17
09.30 - 15.59	1	2	3
16.00 – 18.59	4	14	18
19.00 – 19.45	3	2	5
Total	22	21	43

Generally, the numbers are low, only 2% of passengers took a cycle with them, as in 2015. However there is some indication that the proportion may be higher in the peak than the off peak.

5. Results – Punctuality

The table below shows service punctuality on the survey days.

Table 7 Service Punctuality

	From Manchester	To Manchester
Marple		
Average Lateness	2.6 minutes	3.4 minutes
Maximum Lateness	11 minutes	22 minutes
% right time	18%	21%
No. of trains >5 minutes late	1	5
Rose Hill		
Average Lateness	2.1 minutes	0.3 minutes
Maximum Lateness	13 minutes	2 minutes
% right time	48%	85%
No. of trains >5 minutes late	3	0

Rose Hill is a terminus with relatively long turn round times for much of the day, providing an opportunity for trains that arrive late to depart on time.

Trains from Sheffield were, on average, 8.3 minutes late compared to an average of 1.9 minutes for Manchester-bound trains starting from New Mills Central or Marple. Unlike in 2015, the Sheffield services were much less reliable than shorter distance services. This is likely to reflect pathing constraints in the Hope Valley. All trains at Marple more than 5 minutes late were from or to Sheffield.

In general, the results show that trains from Manchester are more likely to be late than those to Manchester. Overall 92% of trains were less than 5 minutes late. However only 19% of trains at Marple and around half at Rose Hill were on time arriving at the station. Overall, about 40% of trains were on time, but this is assisted by the turn round times at Rose Hill. This shows that there is a lot

of minor delay to the services on these routes and Northern Rail's Right Time initiative still has a long way to go.

Compared to 2015, there has been a deterioration in the punctuality of Manchester-bound trains at Marple, largely due to delays to Hope Valley services, and little change elsewhere.

6. Key Findings

Key conclusions from the survey include:

- Train services from the Marple area are well used;
- Most trips are in the Manchester direction, with only 3% in the Sheffield direction;
- There is a high level of peak commuting, but also significant off peak use;
- The number of inbound trips to Marple, on weekdays, seems to be relatively low;
- Two-thirds of journeys are from Marple with the remainder from Rose Hill.
- The number of people taking cycles on trains is low; and
- On the survey day 92% of trains were less than 5 minutes late but only 40% were on time;

Compared to the 2015 survey, overall usage has increased slightly but with some shift from Marple to Rose Hill and towards travelling earlier in the day. The punctuality of trains from Sheffield was worse than in 2015.

The results indicate that there may be scope for an extra fast train from Marple to Manchester shortly before 08.00 and that there may be demand for a better evening service. Additional ridership in the Sheffield direction might be attracted by a better service and attractive promotions.