

The Poznań metropolitan railway and the European Year of Rail 2021

A contribution from Mr Wojciech Jankowiak, deputy-marshal of the Wielkopolska region and member of the Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe (PURPLE) General Assembly

Synopsis of address delivered to the 33rd PURPLE General Assembly on December 1st 2020

Preface

The 33rd PURPLE General Assembly addressed a number of emerging issues relating to the impacts of the Covid-10 pandemic in peri-urban areas. As part of this exercise, Deputy Marshal of the Wielkopolska region, Mr Wojciech Jankowiak, made a presentation where he outlined a set of circumstances where a regional authority (in this case, Wielkopolska) has made a conscious decision to continue to invest in a high-quality, modern, and efficient metropolitan rail system - the Poznańska Kolej Metropolitalna (PKM), throughout a period of huge uncertainty and unique challenges.

Mr Jankowiak's presentation also marked PURPLE's first intervention in the context of the European Year of Rail 2021 as part of which it plans a number of activities designed to highlight the importance of modern, clean, affordable, and reliable rail systems and services in peri-urban areas across Europe.

Context

Although the establishment and ongoing development and investment programme of the Poznań metropolitan railway system long predates the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr Jankowiak's intervention on December 2nd focused on the ways in which the system and services have been maintained and managed during the time of the coronavirus outbreak. As such, Mr Jankowiak shared insights into some of the particular ways in which the pandemic has impacted on one area of public service in the peri-urban area of a PURPLE member region and how the responsible regional authority has responded to those circumstances.

More specifically the content of the presentation serves as a study of the ways in which a public authority looks to deliver a public transport system as part of a larger plan to encourage, enable and maintain a particular means of sustainable mobility in order to bring about a range and mix of environmental, economic, and social benefits.

Summary of address

Mr Jankowiak described how a system which has to date been delivering more than 30 million passenger trips per annum, to over 100,000 passengers a day, has continued to run services over the period of the outbreak to fluctuating volumes of passengers, directly impacted upon by degrees of lockdown operations which have been imposed upon individuals, businesses, and their daily activities. Continuing to deliver a full level of service at a time of much-reduced and uneven passenger demand has had the anticipated effect of causing the system to operate at a considerable financial loss. Such deficits had been calculated and hence forecast, and agreement had been reached to meet these operational monetary losses as part of a deliberate strategy which gives precedence to long-term gain over short term financial loss.

The calculation that was made here is that continuing to run a full service in the most challenging of circumstances would serve to firmly reinforce a public sense of a mobility solution that can be relied upon and which is safe. The safety dimension has a particular resonance during the current situation and has also resulted in further additional costs in terms of protection measures. This investment, and the continuance of the rail system more generally, is in itself part of a deliberate broader strategy to ensure that a clean, green, attractive, and efficient public rail service remains available throughout and beyond an extraordinary period.

This in turn implies acceptance of the need for continued financial investment in high-quality infrastructure and rolling stock to be made by the region as a part of its ongoing commitment to providing a reliable and affordable public rail system and service to actual and potential users. Such seamless provision at the present time and onwards is designed to attract optimum user volumes in both the short and longer-term by making available a full - indeed customised - timetable of services with the same levels of punctuality and reliability as was the case prior to the Covid-19 outbreak.

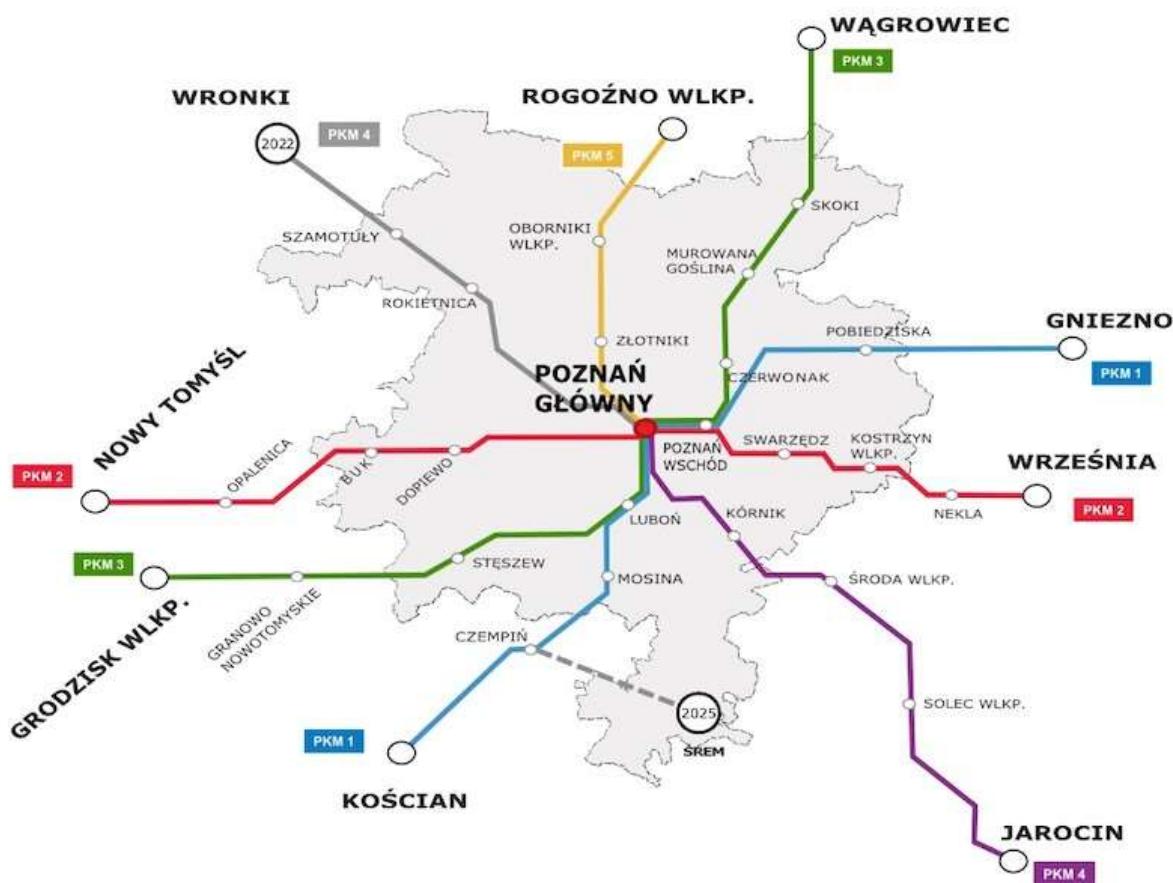
Having seen a drop in passenger volumes during the first stage of the pandemic, a return to pre-existing levels of use was anticipated for September 2020, this was indeed beginning to be seen, but the ambition was ultimately thwarted by the second wave of restrictions. Nevertheless, there is encouragement to be taken from the initial returning rates which seemed to successfully offset what was otherwise looking to be a damaging trend towards the use of private vehicles as what was perceived to be a safer alternative to public transport services. Heading off this trend was exactly part of the thinking for maintaining a constant level and quality of service over the period of the outbreak, a service ready to be taken advantage of as soon as circumstances allowed, so as to support a continuing commitment on the part of the regional authority to support and enable the shift from private to public transport use.

In conclusion, Mr Jankowiak suggested that much remains unknown and uncertain as the situation continues to evolve, but that he and his colleagues remain confident of reaping longer term social, environmental, and economic benefits and in successfully heading off an otherwise damaging modal shift back to private vehicle usage - a trend which many other PURPLE member regions readily recognised and acknowledged.

Afterword

What is essentially being offered up here is a case study of a sustained and planned public sector intervention designed to safeguard positive trends in making a twenty-first century rail service reliable, safe, and attractive; serving as a viable alternative, and a preferred option, to the use of private vehicles. At the same time, it offers a series of insights into how a public authority has striven to build upon previous positives, and manage the risk of shifts in behaviours which would otherwise have damaging effects upon what has been achieved to date and indeed to take the opportunity to turn that very risk into an opportunity for the future.

Further details with regard to many operational aspects of, and a series of rolling news updates relating to the Poznań Metropolitan Rail system can be found at: [Poznańska Kolej Metropolitalna \(metropoliapoznan.pl\)](http://Poznańska Kolej Metropolitalna (metropoliapoznan.pl))



PURPLE (Peri-urban Regions Platform Europe)

PURPLE is striving for greater recognition of Europe's peri-urban regions in European policy and regulation, to ensure long term sustainability for these important, complex, and multi-functional territories. Its members represent peri-urban territories, where urban and rural features co-exist.

These areas are working together to maximise the advantages resulting from their location in proximity to large cities while minimising adverse impacts on the character, landscape and environment that make them distinct and special. Peri-urban regions in Europe are facing over-pressure. The balance between sustainable open space, sustainable agriculture and urban spatial and economic dynamics needs to be re-established. There are opportunities as well as challenges for those living and working in peri-urban regions, which should be reflected in tailor-made policies and strategies.

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