

RAILFUTURE RESPONSE TO CONSULTATIONS ON THE PROPOSED EAST COAST MAIN LINE TIMETABLE MAY 2022

From:	Railfuture Passenger Group & Branches: East Anglia , East Midlands , Lincolnshire , London & South East , North East , North West , Yorkshire & Scotland
Submitted to:	CrossCountry, Great Northern/Thameslink, LNER, Northern, TransPennine Express
Copied to:	East Midlands Railway, First East Coast Trains, Grand Central, Hull Trains, Network Rail & ScotRail

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Introduction

1. Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger and better railway network for passenger and freight users. This response draws together the views of eight Railfuture branches and affiliated Rail User Groups, as authorised by Railfuture's national Board of Directors.
2. A collaborative rail industry process has given rise to a new East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable proposed for implementation from May 2022. Six train operators (London North Eastern Railway (LNER), TransPennine Express (TPE), Great Northern (GN), Thameslink (TL), CrossCountry (XC), and Northern have undertaken separate consultation procedures to engage with stakeholders and the public.
3. Any timetable changes will require further collaboration between operators and Network Rail, hence Railfuture believes the issues should not be taken in isolation. Railfuture has therefore produced this combined response covering strategic and operator-specific issues that is submitted to all six consultations.

Background

4. The ECML is used by a mixture of long-distance, regional and local passenger services, as well as the freight sector, and suffers congestion for most of its length. Many of its trains operate at different speeds and feature varying stopping patterns.

5. Recent investment in the ECML, both in terms of infrastructure and rolling stock, has afforded the opportunity to create an improved robust timetable to make best use of additional capacity.
6. The infrastructure improvements will accommodate two additional long-distance trains to/from London King's Cross every hour, which aspires to create a step-change increase in capacity.

Executive Summary

7. We welcome the intention to create a more robust and efficient ECML timetable and value the opportunity to comment on the proposals. A balance needs to be struck between local/regional connectivity and end to end journey times. The former is more socially inclusive, but the latter more commercially attractive. We believe the overall outcome has been too strongly influenced by long-distance journey time improvements and that best use has not been made of new line capacity.
8. The time saving of 15 minutes between London and Edinburgh and 10 minutes between London and Newcastle is insufficient justification for inadequate service provision elsewhere. Modal shift from air to rail is a legitimate aspiration but we believe there are many areas in which rail can demonstrate a fundamental advantage over air – eg environmental credentials, on-board environment, comfort, catering, internet connectivity and better ability to work on the move – a 15-minute saving on a 4-hour journey will be of limited value in the drive to encourage substantial modal shift. The draft timetable may even have the reverse effect of driving some existing rail passengers back to air or road, from those medium size towns which will see a reduction in overall service levels or connectivity from the new timetables.
9. The proposed introduction of skip-stopping service patterns will mean connectivity will be reduced for many passengers, or in some cases, completely lost. The opportunity to use newly-available capacity for much-needed new services at stations currently poorly-served has been missed. These factors combined will frustrate the growth of rail travel and will leave many would-be passengers with little alternative than to use the car.
10. Conversely, there will be a substantial uplift in seats available between London and Edinburgh, following on from a previous uplift in 2016. London to Newcastle capacity will increase substantially at the expense of regional services that will be truncated. It should be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has likely given rise to a change in travel patterns, and it is unclear that the assumptions made about long-distance travel when compiling this timetable are still valid.
11. We believe the allocation of new resources arising from substantial government investment is seriously flawed and will deliver poorer services for many users. We urge that introduction of the proposed timetable be suspended pending a re-examination of objectives and reassessment of the outputs that can be delivered.
12. However, we strongly welcome the changes to service patterns and frequencies proposed for the GTR network of short and medium-distance services around London and recognise the overall benefits in terms of improved journey times and additional capacity that these will bring. We hope that any revisions to address deficiencies in long-distance timetables will not impact the GTR improvements.
13. There are forthcoming changes to the structure of the rail network arising from the creation of Great British Railways (GBR). We welcome the principle of a single body to oversee promotion and development of the railway, but we believe it is essential that the newly-available ECML capacity be utilised promptly, and we urge that the timetable issues are resolved at the earliest opportunity. We are concerned that any decision to defer further timetable development until GBR is fully in place would introduce unacceptable delay and undermine work already carried out. Our optimum interim solution would see the existing base timetable retained, with the addition of achievable minor enhancements.

Strategic Interventions

14. We understand the need to maximise capacity and are, in principle, supportive of giving priority to longer trains such as LNER's 9-car trains over TPE's, XC's and ECT's 5-car trains, but we believe the priorities of LNER, as the main operator of long-distance services to and from London, should not automatically take precedence over the interests of regional passengers and regular connectivity to London and other places south of York from mid-size stations.
15. Between Newcastle and Edinburgh and between Peterborough and Doncaster, connectivity between some adjacent and nearby stations is lost; passengers are advised to extend their journeys by 'doubling-back' via a distant station, to reach their destination. It is difficult to understand why this worsening of service is necessary at a time when overall line capacity is increasing.
16. Intermediate stations at Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick-Upon-Tweed, Reston (under construction) and Dunbar will retain erratic, skip-stopping service patterns, in most cases worse than those of today. We strongly believe that a semi-fast hourly service that calls at all primary stations should be provided between Edinburgh and Newcastle, ideally as a through train to provide through journeys to/from stations south of Newcastle.
17. Stevenage, Huntingdon, Peterborough, Grantham, Newark and Retford see the introduction or extension of skip-stopping service patterns that will have a detrimental effect on connectivity between them. We strongly believe that one service should be calling at all these stations every hour. Provision should also be made in this service to call at the forthcoming St Neots East West Rail station in due course.
18. Newcastle will see an increase in direct services to/from London from 2 to 3 per hour (4 in the hours when First's East Coast Trains [ECT] Open Access Operator runs), but a reduction in direct services to/from Manchester from 2 to 1. This represents a significant reduction in North East – Manchester direct services and would be a particular hardship for Manchester Airport passengers who may need to change more than once. We would like to see retention of the second hourly Newcastle-Manchester service. An option to extend services to Newcastle would be to divert one train per hour to run via the Durham Coast, which would retain the direct service and open up new journey opportunities for Durham Coast stations which are currently poorly served. This should be a train that is terminating at Newcastle, either the second hourly TPE, the CrossCountry Reading service, or indeed, the third hourly LNER.
19. It is essential that effective and coordinated connectional opportunities between trains and operators are available and maintained. Faster journeys are of little benefit if the time saved is subsequently lost in longer waits for onward connections.
20. We have a general aspiration for a minimum of 2tph at all but the smallest stations.
21. We would like to see earlier morning and later night trains at most stations, but we are concerned that the opposite is proposed at several stations, notably on Saturdays, causing trains to become less attractive overall.
22. We are surprised at the omission of East Midlands Railway's Liverpool/Nottingham to Norwich service from the proposals. This service provides a vital long-distance connection and forms an integral part of Nottingham-Grantham and Peterborough-Ely services that connect to the ECML. We seek assurances that any impact on this service will not have an adverse effect on overall service intervals on the two lines mentioned, and that connectional times at Nottingham into Nottingham-Liverpool trains following the splitting of the through service will be kept to a minimum.
23. We have reservations about the benefits of the new East Coast Trains open-access operation. Historically, open-access operators on the ECML have provided complementary services to the incumbent franchised operator, by serving destinations that were previously

poorly-served. Their operations have driven passenger growth on specific routes and for the railway as a whole. In contrast, the ECT operation serves stations that are, in the main, already well-served. ECT also plans to use short-formation trains in valuable paths, which represents poor allocation of resources and makes the introduction of an integrated overall timetable considerably more difficult. We are also concerned that they can be changed (and halted) at short notice and are concerned that they are being considered in assessing the overall level of service provision (eg at Morpeth). We recognise that the operating rights for ECT are beyond the scope of this timetable review, but in the aftermath of Covid-19 and with the advent of GBR we suggest that a repurposing of the ECT operation should be visited to investigate a mutually beneficial outcome.

24. The consultations examine only passenger services, but we believe it is essential that freight traffic requirements are considered. We understand existing freight volumes are unlikely to be problematic – at the London end of ECML, freight trains will have access to the slow lines from Finsbury Park to Peterborough, then onto the Joint Line to Doncaster then via Ferrybridge lines to York and then as far as Northallerton. We understand that future freight traffic growth may be constrained by signalling and capacity limitations further north and we believe the potential to accommodate an increase in freight traffic should be usefully investigated.
25. We would like to see clear and strong contingencies put in place in the event of cancellations.

LNER

Station / Regional matters

26. Notwithstanding our desire to see an hourly service calling at all principal stations between Edinburgh and Newcastle, we believe the substantial reduction in LNER trains serving Morpeth, Alnmouth, Berwick-upon-Tweed and Dunbar will cause unnecessary hardship through loss of direct services to/from key destinations south of Newcastle. The withdrawal of the well-used Dunbar and Berwick-upon-Tweed stops in an evening peak service from Edinburgh will cause particular hardship. The introduction of infrequent services by open-access operator East Coast Trains does not address these service reductions. It should be noted that ECT trains are just 5-cars in length, convey only standard class accommodation, have less certainty of continued operation and are not subject to the same level of stakeholder scrutiny as DfT-contracted operators.
27. The proposed stopping pattern at Alnmouth, where LNER and CrossCountry both propose to call, gives a service gap in both directions of 23 then 97 minutes.
28. We are extremely concerned about the substantial reduction in service at Morpeth. All LNER daytime services are withdrawn meaning the loss of through services to many destinations south of Newcastle. Additionally, the morning service from Morpeth to Aberdeen – popular with oil industry workers – is also withdrawn. The loss of service is not adequately compensated by revised CrossCountry stopping patterns or new East Coast Trains services.
29. The proposed stopping pattern for King's Cross-Edinburgh limited-stop services is to call alternately at Darlington and Durham, and at Alnmouth and Berwick. Although this provides a regular, if infrequent service at the intermediate stations, we are concerned about the lack of connectivity between them. Furthermore, the withdrawal of all daytime calls at Morpeth eliminates all direct services between Morpeth and Alnmouth, which is unsatisfactory. We recognise some connectivity between Darlington and Durham is provided by TPE and XC, although overall provision is less frequent than today.
30. The loss of service from Darlington (spread across all operators) is substantial, reducing from 6 tph to 4.5 tph, and with several destinations no longer accessible without a change of trains. We understand this still represents a better service than provided at other stations, but we regret the loss of opportunity for passengers.
31. We regret that the premium "Highland Chieftain" service will no longer call at Darlington, despite the stationing of many Scottish soldiers at the nearby Catterick Garrison.
32. We welcome the introduction of a through service to Middlesbrough and in due course, Cleethorpes.
33. We are concerned that connections to/from certain routes linking to the LNER network have worsened. Average connection times between Scarborough services and London services at York have increased from 9 to 26 minutes.
34. We understand the reasons why the through service to Bradford has returned to 1 train per day, but we urge priority is given to finding a workable solution to provide Bradford with the frequent London connections that a city of its size demands.
35. We welcome the additional daytime calls at Horsforth in Harrogate-London services, but we question why these services need to pick-up/set-down only. Similarly, we question why pick-up/set-down only restrictions are applied at Shipley and Keighley in Bradford/Skipton services.
36. The bringing forward by an hour of an early Harrogate-London service will bring a welcome earlier arrival in London, but in its current timings the train attracts commuter traffic into Leeds, and we are concerned that the retiming will lead to overcrowding into Leeds in the morning peak.

- 37. We regret the loss of through services between Leeds and Aberdeen.
- 38. The proposed stopping pattern between Doncaster and Peterborough eliminates virtually all Retford-Newark direct trains and Grantham-Newark operates 2-hourly. We believe an hourly all-stations service is essential on this section. The infrequent service provided by Hull Trains does not, on its own, provide an adequate service for Retford. Hull Trains are subject to the same qualifications relating to open-access operators as described for ECT at paragraph 26. There is also concern about reduced connectional opportunities from Retford and Newark at Peterborough with XC's Birmingham-Stansted Airport service and vice-versa connections with ECML trains to/from stations on the Peterborough-Leicester-Birmingham route.
- 39. Some connections at Peterborough between trains from East Anglia and LNER trains to the north are overly-long. Notably, the connection from Stansted Airport and Cambridge into the Edinburgh service is usually 61 minutes. Cambridge has substantial university activities and is emerging as one of the fastest growing economies and populations in the UK. The city has strong links with Edinburgh and Scotland in general.
- 40. We would like to see a fast hourly service retained between Peterborough and Stevenage. Withdrawal of this connection will extend journey times from the present 30 minutes to typically 56 minutes using Thameslink services.

First arrivals and last departures

- 41. We welcome the increase in number of morning peak arrivals at Kings Cross from 8 to 11 before 09:00 and from 15 to 18 before 10:00.
- 42. The lack of a direct King's Cross-Harrogate service after 16:39 is unsatisfactory.
- 43. We are concerned that last LNER services from London leave earlier for a number of destinations on Saturday evenings: Newcastle 20:03, currently 21:00; Leeds 21:40, currently 22:00 and Retford 18:45, currently 22:00.
- 44. The lack of later Saturday night southbound services from Edinburgh to the Scottish Borders and Northern England is disappointing. Ideally, Saturday southbound departures from Edinburgh should be provided up to 23:00.

Responses to LNER Questionnaire

45. For LNER's specific questions, our responses are as follows:

1. What is your current age? If you are under 16, please ensure you have consent from a parent/guardian to complete this survey.	Members are in all age bands
2. Which is your home station? (That is, the station from which you most frequently start a journey on LNER services, or where you change onto an LNER service if your usual journey starts elsewhere)	Members travel from all LNER stations
3. Which is your most regular destination station? (That is, the station at which you most frequently end a journey on LNER services, either because it is your final destination or where you change onto another operators' services)	Members travel to all LNER stations
4. On what days of the week do you most frequently travel (thinking about before COVID-19 restrictions)?	Member travel will vary
5. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with our proposed new timetable?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Very dissatisfied

6. How strongly do you agree or disagree that our proposed new timetable will...

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
make train times more convenient for you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
shorten journey times between the places you want to travel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
enable you to connect conveniently between services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
make journeys more comfortable for you	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
benefit the economy, tourism or businesses along the East Coast	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
encourage you to make more of your journeys by train	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
increase capacity on the network	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. Do you agree we have presented our proposals for our new timetable in a clear way?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Neutral
8. What further comments, if any, would you like to make in relation to the proposals for our new timetable?	Refer to the remainder of our submission
9. Have we given you enough opportunity to comment?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No, not had enough opportunity to comment
The size of the shift in approach means a longer and earlier in the process consultation period should have been provided	
10. Thinking about the journey you made most frequently with LNER, if any, before the COVID-19 pandemic, how often did you make that journey?	Members' frequency of travel encompasses all choices

11. Thinking of your pre-COVID-19 travel patterns, which of the following train operators do you travel with, if any? Please tick all that apply.	All listed
12. Thinking of your travel pre-COVID-19, what was your main reason for travelling by train?	Members make journeys for all the specified reasons
13. Thinking of your travel pre-COVID-19, in relation to your most regular journey on LNER services, how long is a typical journey?	Members make journeys under and over two hours
14. Thinking about the future beyond the current COVID-19 pandemic, how do you expect your travel patterns to change?	We expect individual members to alter journeys for each of these choices
15. In which of the following ways, if any, do you most frequently buy your tickets when travelling on LNER services?	Members use all of these channels

TransPennine Express

46. One of our strategic objectives is that there needs to be an hourly service at all principal stations between Newcastle and Edinburgh, hence we oppose the withdrawal of TPE services on this section of route. We strongly believe that provision should reflect demand, rather than operational convenience, but we find the truncation of the Edinburgh-Liverpool service at Newcastle to be perverse, given the rolling stock is maintained in Edinburgh and will require to run empty to/from Newcastle for maintenance purposes. We note that TPE are in discussions to operate an Edinburgh-Newcastle shuttle and would support this as an hourly service. However, we do not believe the provision of occasional trains in service that would otherwise run empty for maintenance purposes is an adequate or desirable solution. Specifically, such an hourly service could address inadequate service levels proposed for the new station at Reston and gaps in the proposed stopping pattern at Alnmouth, where LNER and CrossCountry both propose to call, but with a service gap in both directions of 23 then 97 minutes. Such a service should also call at Berwick-upon-Tweed, Morpeth & Dunbar. Whilst a standalone Newcastle – Edinburgh service would be tolerable, it would be preferable for this service to operate between Edinburgh and Liverpool as an integral part of the TPE timetable.
47. The lack of later Saturday night southbound services from Edinburgh to the Scottish Borders and Northern England is disappointing. Ideally, Saturday southbound departures from Edinburgh should be provided up to 23:00.
48. We oppose truncation of the Newcastle-Manchester Airport service between York and Newcastle. We would like to see the through Newcastle-Manchester service retained but believe consideration should be given to re-routing via the Durham Coast. As well as maintaining the direct connection with Manchester, this would open up new journey opportunities to/from Eaglescliffe, Stockton, Hartlepool and Sunderland which are currently poorly served. An alternative solution would be to divert the hourly CrossCountry Reading-Newcastle service via the Durham Coast, or indeed the third hourly LNER, and retain TPE's Manchester-Newcastle direct via the ECML. At the Manchester end we would like to see the TPE service run directly from Stalybridge into Manchester Piccadilly, rather than Manchester Victoria. This would be of considerable benefit for Manchester Airport passengers and those seeking connections on the south side of Manchester. Castlefield Corridor proposals suggest there will be only 1 tph between Victoria and Piccadilly.
49. We are concerned about the reduction in calls at Northallerton and the imbalance of service this will cause. We welcome additional calls in CrossCountry services that will retain connectivity with Leeds, York and ECML stations to the north. However, the revised stopping patterns proposed for the Manchester Airport-Saltburn service give hourly northbound and two-hourly southbound frequencies, which are inadequate and confusing for passengers. We note that southbound trains leave Saltburn at the same time past every hour but inexplicably wait five minutes extra at Middlesbrough on the hours when Northallerton is not served.
50. In regard to the overall TPE timetable, we welcome the introduction of 2 tph at the four stations between Stalybridge and Huddersfield from early morning to evening and the improved service at Stalybridge. However, last connections from the East Coast are considerably worse than in December 2019. The last direct train from Scarborough to Stalybridge, Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite was then at 21:34. From May 2022 it will be over an hour earlier at 20:30 and require two changes of train.
51. We welcome the increased frequency of services from 2-hourly to hourly at Chester-le-Street.
52. We welcome the introduction of later evening services to Teesside and the improved journey opportunities they will bring.
53. We welcome the improved connection times available at Seamer between TPE Scarborough services and Northern Hull services

54. The loss of service from Darlington (spread across all operators) is substantial, reducing from 6 tph to 4.5 tph, and with several destinations no longer accessible without a change of trains. We understand this still represents a better service than provided at other stations, but we regret the loss of opportunity for passengers.

CrossCountry

56. We welcome the retention of two CrossCountry trains per hour on the Newcastle-Birmingham axis. We also welcome the diversion of a few key services to give a consistent hourly service via both Leeds and Doncaster, although we have concerns about a reduction in evening peak capacity between Leeds and Sheffield (where CrossCountry provides the single fast hourly service), due to a peak-hour train being re-routed via Doncaster.
57. We would like to see the second hourly Newcastle-Manchester TPE service retained but diverted to run via the Durham Coast and open up new journey opportunities for Durham Coast stations which are currently poorly served. An alternative solution would be to divert the hourly CrossCountry Reading-Newcastle service via the Durham Coast, or indeed the third hourly LNER, and run TPE's Manchester-Newcastle direct via the ECML.
58. We welcome additional calls in CrossCountry services at Northallerton that will retain connectivity with Leeds, York and ECML stations to the north, and introduce through journey opportunities to Sheffield, Derby, Birmingham and the South West.
59. Notwithstanding our desire to see an hourly service calling at all principal stations between Edinburgh and Newcastle (to be operated by TPE and ideally an extension of the Liverpool service), we are concerned about the withdrawal of all CrossCountry calls at Dunbar except for one train per day in each direction.
60. The lack of later Saturday night southbound services from Edinburgh to Scottish Borders and Northern England is disappointing. Ideally, Saturday southbound departures from Edinburgh should be provided up to 23:00.
61. The loss of service from Darlington (spread across all operators) is substantial, reducing from 6 tph to 4.5 tph, and with several destinations no longer accessible without a change of trains. We understand this still represents a better service than provided at other stations, but we regret the loss of opportunity for passengers. The proposed stopping pattern at Alnmouth, where LNER and CrossCountry both propose to call, gives an unacceptably imbalanced gap in services in both directions of 23 then 97 minutes.

Northern

63. We are concerned about the proposal to operate cross-Newcastle local services as two self-contained services, each terminating at Newcastle. This will remove many through journey opportunities, not least those serving the Metro Centre – a destination well-used by shoppers and workers from all over the North East. This affects trains from Morpeth and Cramlington to the north of Newcastle and destinations across the Durham Coast route as far as Saltburn and Whitby. We do not understand why more use cannot be made of reversing and the High Level Bridge to avoid conflict with ECML services from the south.
64. We note that the service proposed in 2016 to link Middlesbrough, Thornaby, Stockton, Durham, Chester-le-Street and Newcastle Central is absent from the proposals. This service would substantially improve Tees-Tyne connectivity and we believe it should be accommodated at the earliest opportunity.
65. We are concerned about the reduction in number of services calling at Manors, which is the primary station to access Northumbria University campus and leisure facilities at the Quayside, Millennium Bridge and Biscuit Factory art gallery. Manors also has unexploited potential to provide interconnection with the Metro Station beneath it for the Metro Coast route, without the need for a double change at Newcastle then Monument.
66. We regret the opportunity has not been taken to create earlier southbound services for commuters from Morpeth and Cramlington to Newcastle. Whilst Morpeth passengers can access some LNER or CrossCountry services, Cramlington's first southbound train is at the very late time of 08:00 not reaching Newcastle until 08:13. At least one, and preferably two, earlier trains are required to make commuting viable from this town with population 35,000.
67. The elimination of the Cramlington call on the return commuter 17:17 service from Newcastle is unacceptable and this should be reinstated.
68. We welcome the creation of a second fast train path between Sheffield and Leeds via Wakefield Westgate for a proposed future Northern service.
69. We welcome the increase in frequency from 1tph to 2tph in York-Leeds via Harrogate services.
70. We note that the hourly shuttle service proposed for York-Scarborough is absent from the Northern consultation document and seek assurance that this service is still to be introduced.
71. We are concerned about potential overcrowding from the loss of three evening peak services from Leeds to Cross Gates, Garforth, East Garforth, Micklefield and South Milford. We understand Northern are urgently seeking a resolution to this issue and support their efforts to achieve this.
72. We are concerned about the introduction of extended connection times at Middlesbrough for passengers from the Esk Valley travelling towards Sunderland and Newcastle.
73. A morning LNER Harrogate-London service has been retimed to run an hour earlier. In its current timings the train attracts commuter traffic into Leeds, and we are concerned that the retiming will lead to overcrowding into Leeds in the morning peak.
74. We welcome the improved connection times available at Seamer between TPE Scarborough services and Northern Hull services

Great Northern/Thameslink

Introduction

75. Overall, we support the new GTR timetable from May 2022, but there are some changes that could better meet passengers' aspirations & needs and it is essential to recognise that whilst some will see improvements, others will get a worse service.
76. In the case of GTR, unlike other TOCs, these priorities do not need change – we welcome the basis of changes that focus on expected increased demand on the Cambridge route – however, we hope that some of the other shortcomings detailed below are addressed.

Approach

77. The timetable for the TL/GN outer suburban stations is supported, with all stations between Hitchin and Peterborough having 2 trains per hour, maintaining the current regular 30 minute interval; it is essential that this frequency is maintained. The proposed timetable for the intermediate stations on the Hitchin to Cambridge line is better with all stations having at least 2 trains per hour at an even 30 minute interval, including at, what we believe is the first time, Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxtton stations: indeed this must be the best service these three stations have ever had. There is also a marked uplift in service frequencies at Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston stations to 4 trains per hour with a maximum waiting time between trains of 20 minutes: a more even 15 minute interval between trains at these stations would have been better but otherwise this is an excellent timetable.
78. Whilst individual commuters may in future attend their workplace less frequently, the tens of thousands of new homes that are mandated in council areas by government guidelines in the area covered by GTR's GN & ECML Thameslink services, and the trend towards movement of part-time commuters out of London in search of a better lifestyle, gives a very credible case for an increase in the number of individual people travelling across the GTR network.
79. The loss of clockface departures for services for some flows is disappointing and more work to attempt to return to this would be appreciated. Examples include northbound from Moorgate towards Welwyn Garden City in the evening peak (and until 20:00).
80. It is a disappointment that all the TOCs (and Open Access Operators) were unable (or were not given permission) to provide a single timetable document to cover all services on the ECML; this would have made it easier to understand connections and total service provision.

Cambridge Branch

81. We are very pleased at the alterations to the fast services in the down direction that will now leave London Kings Cross or St Pancras International at 01, 24, 31 & 54 minutes past each hour and arrive in Cambridge in that order with no overtaking on route. This is an excellent revision and will help spread the loadings (and match the current arrangement in the up direction). It now becomes safe to automatically get the next service for the fastest journey.
- We are pleased that this approach also applies on Sundays, albeit for three trains per hour.
82. We like the speeding up of Cambridge Flyer services.
83. Net, we like the peak hour change for the Cambridge branch; we feel that the proposed service revision is an improvement in the Monday to Friday peak, spreading the London load from/to stations including Cambridge, Royston, Baldock, Letchworth and Hitchin, and providing faster and more frequent services for stations such as Foxtton, Shepreth & Meldreth by running services fast between Welwyn North & Kings Cross. This avoids overtaking moves which should improve reliability. The new Letchworth Garden City / London King's Cross stopping service addresses services for stations no longer served by services

from Baldock and further north during the peak hours but see also 'Inter-station connectivity' below.

84. We are pleased that there are no proposed gaps in the timetable as current to facilitate freight train workings to Barrington via Foxton.

Cambridge & Kings Lynn

85. As regards Late afternoon services between Cambridge & Kings Lynn, the current 16:20 (M-F) Cambridge to King's Lynn in the current timetable is not shown in the revised timetable. This service loads heavily as a relief to the equally busy following standard time service at 16:35. At the GTR webinar we were assured that in the revised timetable that 16:16 service Cambridge to Ely is being extended to Kings Lynn, even though the published revised timetable draft does not show this. We note the revised timetable does have a 1T51 17:18 King' Lynn to London Kings Cross. We assume this is the return journey of the extended 16:16 ex Cambridge to Ely; if it is not a drafting error, the 16:16 should be extended to Kings Lynn.

- We are pleased that sufficient time has been found (vs the current 16:20) so as to be able to include a stop at Cambridge North, as this station serves the nearby Cambridge Regional College with its 9,000 students drawn from all over the region.
 - Separate to the timetable consultation, we hope you can visit this college to explain the train service and the ticketing system. Many student apprentices are on 2 or 3 day weeks at College plus 2 days at their employer.

86. See also 'Inter-station connectivity' below.

ECML to Peterborough

87. Given the LNER services from Kings Cross to Stevenage at 16:39, 17:39, 18:33 and 18:39, the possibility of the GN services at 16:42, 17:42 and 18:42 calling at Hitchin first stop rather than Stevenage, should be contemplated; and in recompense, the 16:54 and 17:54 could call at Stevenage instead of Hitchin, as the 18:54 does. As well as giving a better balance of services overall, the additional Knebworth - Stevenage services would be more useful than Knebworth – Hitchin services.

88. The possibility of a regular faster service to Peterborough (with limited – eg 4 – stops), quite possibly continuing to Doncaster or York should be considered. This would help address one the greater challenges with the changes proposed by LNER which much reduces, or even makes near impossible, travel between stations such as Newark & Retford. Even if capacity south of Peterborough is not available, and running times need to be extended because of waits at stations for LNER and Open Access Operators, we believe this opportunity should be properly investigated, even if it turns into a standalone service.

89. See also 'Inter-station connectivity' below.

Welwyn Garden City semi-fast service

90. It would be good if the new semi-fast Welwyn Garden City to/from Sevenoaks peak services could be extended to run for an additional hour (two services) in the morning peak and for one additional service either side of those currently scheduled for the evening peak.

Inter-station connectivity

91. It seems that focus is on to/from London, rather than considering other passenger flows. Some passengers will be disadvantaged by the amended calling patterns in the peak on longer distance services for journeys not involving London – eg:

- We are concerned on the effect on users who travel to work in peak hours from stations north of Hitchin (other than Letchworth Garden City) to stations south of Hitchin, notably Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield; and, to a degree, Stevenage (we note the planned expansion of Glaxo Smith Kline there). We urge you to monitor any concerns from current and potential users, but we acknowledge some Cambridge line services do call at Stevenage from most stations.
- This does result in the loss of direct train services between stations such as Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City to Cambridge and stations north of Letchworth Garden City.
- The approach does significantly disadvantage some travellers – for instance, there are some substantial wait times in the new service timetables – eg 07:48 from Royston, change at Hitchin 08:05 to 08:20, arrive Welwyn Garden City 0838 – a 50 minute journey time, rather than 35 minutes off-peak direct. This 50% uplift in time is a significant disincentive to this market and work is needed to see if connection wait times can be reduced.
- Connection times can be also problematic off-peak – eg Welwyn Garden City to Peterborough involve a 25 minute wait. Whilst this is not the largest of flows, it is a significant deterrent to travel, and if connection wait times can be reduced that would be good.
- We understand there are noticeable numbers of such passengers, although data is not public. We believe this data and the justification for the switch should be released to the public domain.

Weekend services:

92. Cambridge line:

- We are very pleased that the Saturday service for stations between Royston & Cambridge is planned to be increased to a 30 minute interval as on Monday to Friday. With the changes in relative demand between the Monday to Friday peaks, the rest of Mondays to Fridays and the weekend, this type of change is essential.
- We hope that you will work to implementing a full “Saturday” service on Sunday as soon as possible. We note that the 2T08 from Cambridge to Kings Lynn and 1T13 Kings Lynn to Cambridge are not certain owing to planned engineering works. We believe that these services should run even if they have to be a bus on a minimum of publicised Sundays if necessary.

93. Peterborough line:

- We urge to work to implementing a full “Saturday service” on Sunday on this increasingly busy route.
- In the meantime, on Sundays the xx.54 semi fasts from King’s Cross to Peterborough should run all day long, rather than just at 16:54, 17:54 and 18:54, as should the xx.05 from Peterborough to King’s Cross, which only currently runs at 09:05, 10:05 & 11:05 from Peterborough. Adding a 17:05 from Peterborough and a 22:54 from Kings Cross and would be particularly beneficial as they would encourage the evenings out in London market (as shows etc are increasingly available 7 days a week).

94. Moorgate services:

- We very much welcome the uplift in Saturday services; as with Cambridge line services above, this improvement is essential to support what will be a busy day in relative terms.
- The Sunday service needs to be 4 trains per hour on both routes to match new patterns of demand. We note that, from time to time, service frequency may need to be reduced when capacity is reduced due to engineering work.

Existing Open Access Operators

Grand Central

95. We would like to see all Grand Central trains call at Stockton, although we recognise this is a commercial decision for the open-access operator.

Hull Trains

96. We would like to see the 16.15 departure from King's Cross stop at Retford to provide a consistent service across all Hull Trains services. This is a conveniently-timed service, so the omission of the Retford stop is particularly disappointing; again we recognise this is a commercial decision for the open-access operator.

Appendix: Overview of May 2022 ECML Timetable Proposals

LNER's five trains per hour into and out of London King's Cross will increase to six. The existing two trains per hour (tph) between London and Edinburgh will be around 15 minutes faster. These will be supplemented by a new hourly London-Newcastle service. London-Newcastle journeys will be around 10 minutes faster. Some Edinburgh services will serve Aberdeen – 4 trains per day (tpd), Glasgow, Inverness and Stirling (1 tpd each).

LNER will continue to serve Leeds with 2 tph, with some services extended to Harrogate (every other hour) and Bradford (1 tpd). The final hourly slot at London King's Cross will be shared by services to/from York and Lincoln, providing a two-hourly service to/from each. One York train pair per day will be extended to Middlesbrough, subject to delivery of infrastructure improvements.

TPE's hourly Edinburgh–Liverpool service will be amended to operate only between Newcastle and Liverpool. The hourly Newcastle–Manchester Airport service will be amended to operate only between York and Manchester Victoria.

TPE's Manchester Airport–Redcar service is planned to be extended to Saltburn, subject to delivery of infrastructure improvements. TPE is also in discussions to operate a limited shuttle service between Newcastle and Edinburgh.

XC's hourly Edinburgh-Plymouth via Leeds and Newcastle-Reading via Doncaster services will continue to operate with minor timing alterations.

Northern's Leeds-York via Harrogate service will increase from hourly to two trains per hour.

Northern's cross-Newcastle services will no longer be linked, instead being worked as two self-contained services, each terminating at Newcastle.

Some other Northern services will be retimed, some significantly, whilst maintaining basic frequency.

Great Northern fast services between King's Cross and Cambridge/King's Lynn will be speeded up slightly but stopping services between King's Cross and Cambridge will be significantly retimed and service patterns altered to merge provision with King's Cross-Baldock services and accommodate a new King's Cross-Letchworth Garden City stopping service.

Some other Great Northern services will be slightly retimed and see minor changes in the evening peak.

Thameslink's Welwyn Garden City-King's Cross and Sevenoaks-Blackfriars services will be combined in the peak hours only, to create a through service calling at St Pancras.

The new timetable recognises the additional open access services due to commence in October 2021; five new train pairs per day will be introduced between Edinburgh and London, provided by new open access operator, East Coast Trains (ECT) – part of First Group. These trains will call only at Edinburgh, Morpeth, Newcastle, Stevenage (some services) and King's Cross and will convey only standard class accommodation.

Open access operator, Grand Central, will increase the number of daily return journeys between Sunderland and London from five to six. Some of Grand Central's departure/arrival times will change quite significantly.

Across all operators, the new timetable will see revised stopping patterns and different levels of service at many stations compared to the pre-pandemic timetable. Some stations will see a change of operator providing services.