

## **Network Rail East Coast Main Line 2016 capacity Review Draft for Consultation**

*Response by railfuture*

### **Question 1**

*Does the approach used provide an understanding of the demand for paths after 2016?*

- 1 The study initiative to enhance the capacity of the route to meet the aspirations of stakeholders to increase service provision and serve new destinations from 2016 onwards is a welcome reflection of the need to grow the national rail network.
- 2 Whilst 'London' may numerically dominate passenger and freight traffic flows, there is an established need to enhance the provision for services to Scotland from stations across the national rail network, and between intermediate places.
- 3 Capacity enhancements are needed now and progressively in the future to meet the demand forecasts for passenger and freight traffic nationally and across the North of England, for example, in the Consultation Draft of the Northern Route Utilisation Strategy
- 4 Whilst the need to preserve some commercial confidentiality is appreciated, it is not clear that the aspirations considered in Section 2 (Paragraph 1.2.3 identifies the aspirants) are the same as those considered in Section 3 (Paragraph 3.4.1). Specifically, it is not known whether the constraints identified in Section 2 have been influenced by Network Rail's imaginary aspirations included in Section 3 (Paragraph 3.4.1) and hence whether the conclusions of the respective Sections are consistent and compatible.
- 5 Capacity enhancements such as the reopening of the Leamside Line would deliver new business as well as expanding the capacity of the ECML route and providing for increased freight traffic. Equally, in-fill electrification between York and Leeds is likely to release suppressed demand; this link will be of particular importance as preparations for High Speed Rail 2 and its impact on the conventional rail network are developed.
- 6 There are some new uncertainties that may affect the conclusions drawn in the document:
  - The impact of the emerging consequences of the government spending review on the CP4 programme.
  - Much of the work is based on increments to the ECML timetable proposed for introduction in May 2011. However, the iteration of the timetable used in the study is not stated; the service patterns most recently indicated appear to differ from those stated in the consultation document. Key issues remain the operator chosen to provide the Edinburgh/Motherwell/Glasgow extensions to the ECML service and the confirmation by ORR of the track access requirements for the East Coast plan to operate a Kings Cross/Newark service.
  - The InterCity Express Programme (IEP) has been put on hold and any new train programme seems unlikely to match the originally intended IEP provision (Footnote Page 7).

- 7 It is commonly observed that in continental Europe, major stations seem to have more platform capacity, less intensively used, with a resultant predictability of platform availability and reduction in delays. Paradoxically, sweating the railway assets in Britain in the interests of efficiency has resulted in reduced flexibility, poorer performance and apparently higher costs.
- 8 It should be a key facet of any decisions ultimately taken about the delivery of capacity for the 2016 timetable, that it will provide a 'platform' to facilitate future enhancements to meet the long-term need identified in the Northern RUS and implicit in the High Speed Rail 2 proposals.
- 9 The Scenario approach is considered to be helpful, albeit there are no doubt strongly divergent views on the acceptability of some of the trade-offs identified, such as LDHS journey time penalties to accommodate increased capacity. That said, *railfuture* agrees that Scenarios C & D are the best identified to form the basis for further economic study and the preparation of business cases. However, we retain some concern to ensure that the findings have not been unduly influenced by the introduction of Network Rail's imaginary aspirations (Paragraph 3.4.1).

## **Question 2**

*Does the methodology for assessing the capacity of the route provide a clear understanding of how the aspirations can be accommodated on the route and the necessary trade-offs or capacity enhancements that would be required to accommodate them?*

- 10 The train paths identified must accommodate passenger and freight growth on the scale indicated in the Northern RUS as well as growth further south along the route (we have yet to assess the implications in the soon to be published London & South East RUS). The programme of enhancements to meet the needs of 2016 should be developed to facilitate progressive improvements in the longer term. Plans should recognise the need to achieve a significant shift in passenger travel mode choice from car to train and freight traffic from heavy goods vehicle to rail freight, in order to reduce carbon emissions and contribute significantly to the Climate Change Act targets.
- 11 In building capacity to facilitate future enhancements to meet the long-term need identified in the Northern RUS, the opportunity should be taken to work towards an effective, electrified four-track railway north of Doncaster. Capacity enhancement schemes in this context would include:
  - Temple Hurst Junction/Hambleton North Junction via Selby, particularly for freight services.
  - Northallerton/Ferryhill via the Stockton/Stillington route.
  - The Leamside route from Ferryhill to Newcastle via Washington and Pelaw.Such routes would not only enhance capacity for passenger and freight traffic but would also provide disruption diversion routes and significantly increase the ability to deliver a 7-Day railway, all of which should be given full consideration in the development of business cases.

- 12 The scenarios developed, of course, recognise the benefits of the Stillington route, the need for various enhancements at Darlington and the re-opening of the Leamside Line in isolation. These proposed enhancements are strongly supported.
- 13 In developing capacity, it is of particular concern that the benefits of a regular interval passenger service pattern should be recognised. This is of particular importance north of Doncaster where other interCity services (Cross Country, Transpennine Express) serve stations along the ECML. From Doncaster to Edinburgh the ECML timetable as a whole must deliver an essentially regular service for passengers, regardless of the operating company involved. This requirement should take precedence over capacity gains achieved for example, by grouping together trains of similar operating characteristics.
- 14 Capacity increases achieved at the expense of current or potential crossing and connecting services are unlikely to prove acceptable. Transpennine services, Durham Coast to Tyne Valley line, Wakefield Doncaster and the future passenger services planned for the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne services would be examples.
- 15 The local train services to stations on the ECML not only provide important connecting services but also are key parts of the local transport network (Table 2.5). The service from Tweedbank is not properly described as 'aspirational'; it will be operational before 2016
- 16 The provision of capacity for an inter-regional service between Newcastle and Edinburgh is supported, subject to the findings of the current study commissioned by Transport Scotland and Scot rail. This service may contribute strongly to the optimisation of service provision at the intermediate stations and may also promote the opening of an additional station(s) in Scotland.
- 17 The role of the 'Hertford Loop' may require further evaluation. The desirable option to facilitate extra LDHS services may require an upgrade to eliminate journey time penalties, but calls at e.g. Hertford may generate new business from those travelling further north. Similarly, enhancement of the GN/GE Joint Line as well as benefiting rail freight would generate new business in travel to the north and Scotland.
- 18 Tables 2.1 to 2.5 provide a valuable summary of the situation in the route sections concerned, albeit, there are no doubt strongly divergent views on the acceptability of some of the trade-offs identified. The missing link is perhaps the presentation of a strategy overall, showing how work undertaken in the shorter term (2016) will contribute to the development of an effective four-track ECML in the longer term. Such a strategy would recognise the synergistic benefits of the improvements for long distance, inter-regional and local passengers, freight, charter trains, disruption management and the 7-Day railway.
- 19 In summary, *railfuture* supports the development of business cases for Scenarios C & D, which should be mutually supportive, not exclusive; Scenario D, Table 2.9 includes unspecified improvements at Darlington and a re-opened Leamside Line among its capacity enhancing solutions. However, we suggest that capacity

should not be enhanced at the cost of LDHS journey time or the development of an ECML timetable providing an essentially regular service for passengers, regardless of the operating company involved. Work undertaken to provide capacity for the 2016 timetable should deliver a 'platform' to facilitate future enhancements to meet the long-term need identified in the Northern RUS (and presumably in the London & South East RUS) and contribute to the development of an effective four-track ECML in the longer term.

### Question 3

*How well does the economic assessment help you understand how stakeholders can increase the value of the ECML through alternative uses of potential additional capacity?*

- 20 The inclusion of socio-economic benefits in the economic assessment is a welcome step, although Paragraph 3.4.2 tends to read as though it is work in progress. The generalised conclusion that *aspirations with the largest number of additional services tend to have the highest estimated socio-economic value* and its corollary that *the lowest estimated socio economic value tends to have the lowest number of additional services* may seem to be statements of the obvious but do serve to reinforce the need to provide a service as against an occasional train.
- 21 The need to preserve commercial confidentiality is stated in Section 3 although the operators concerned are identified in Section 2. There is a need to ensure that the economic analysis has not been unduly influenced by the introduction of Network Rail's imaginary aspirations (Paragraph 3.4.1).
- 22 As noted in paragraph 7 above, it is paradoxical that sweating the railway assets in Britain in the interests of efficiency has resulted in reduced flexibility, poorer performance and in a railway apparently more costly than those in Europe. It is recommended that an attempt be made in the economic analysis to reflect this position.
- 23 It is noted that the King's Cross-Newark North Gate services are *likely to generate less value per train than the majority of aspirations* (Paragraph 3.4.2/6).
- 24 The finding that increasing capacity (Page 37) *by spreading the intermediate calls between the services on the route, thereby reducing journey opportunities between these stations Figure 3.6 illustrates the economic penalty that this loss of shorter distance connectivity would incur* is of equal importance to the services north of York and Newcastle. In judging the trade-off between extra LDHS services and improved shorter distance connectivity, there is a clear case for taking into account the views of the stakeholders in the communities concerned.
- 25 It is of particular importance to ensure that the business cases developed take a holistic view of the railway. For example, the business case for re-opening the Leamside line should include:
  - The benefit of the Line to the operational railway as a diversionary route for disruption management and its contribution to the pressing need to develop a 7-Day railway.
  - The benefit to rail freight services from the provision of a terminal at TurSDale at the southern end to a link to the new Nissan electric car plant at the northern end.

- The impact of local services on the Line in reducing significantly the excessive traffic volumes on the essentially parallel Gateshead/Newcastle Western Bypass (A1 road).
  - The establishment of a rail service for Washington (Population 53,400) as recommended in ATOC document *Connecting Communities* in June 2009. Such an approach allows for the differing socio-economic benefits of freight and passenger services to be recognised and for account to be taken of the wider economic benefits of the schemes, for example in reducing carbon emissions and congestion on the road network.
- 26 The business cases developed should take note of the need to provide capacity for charter trains; such trains bring important commercial benefit to the places served and might perhaps be best included within the open access category. Equally, the benefits should reflect a freight policy of path allocation as required, rather than block booking, to ensure that best use is made of the capacity provided.
- 27 It is noted that there is some uncertainty generated by the implication (Paragraph 3.5) that Scenario D would not require additional infrastructure, in contrast to Table 2.9, which appears to suggest Scenario D to include improvements at Darlington and a re-opened Leamside Line among its capacity enhancing solutions. Hence, it is considered important for the business cases for both Scenarios C & D to be developed in a complementary way, to ensure that the best value for money is obtained from making best use of existing facilities together with the selective implementation of infrastructure enhancements. Such an approach is more likely to ensure that the synergistic benefits of developing a four-track ECML in the long term are realised.
- 28 *railfuture* looks forward to further information and consultation, when the results of the business case studies, including the wider economic benefits are available.

This consolidated national response has been prepared after consultations with the following *railfuture* branches: Scotland, North East, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, East Midlands and, London & South East. The *Railfuture* national Passenger Committee was also consulted.

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