

Network Rail West Midlands & Chilterns Route Utilisation Strategy - Draft for Consultation
Response by *railfuture*

West Midlands and Chiltern RUS Consultation Response
RUS Programme Manager
Network Rail
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Dear Sir,

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

Railfuture is a national voluntary group organised in England as twelve regional branches. This response has been led on behalf of Railfuture by the principal stakeholder, the West Midlands Branch, with contributions from the other branches directly affected. The document has been reviewed and a number of drafts sent out to contributors, leading to amendments before the response was finalised.

Generally - We welcome the work that has gone into gathering the detail on network capacity and existing services described in the draft West Midlands and Chilterns RUS. It is well known that there has been a steady growth in the number of rail passengers on all routes in the region and it is clear that overcrowding on these routes is now a major concern. Therefore we welcome, in general terms, the recommendations in the RUS but we have identified some gaps and most importantly have structured our response giving a priority for the interventions proposed.

Structure of Response - The response has three parts, part 1 includes the interventions that we consider have top priority, generally these have far reaching Regional economic implications. Part 2 brings forward the interventions that need to be considered but do not appear to have received appropriate weight in the draft document. Part 3 details omissions that should be addressed.

Yours Faithfully

Nigel Cripps

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RailFuture – Response to West Midlands and Chilterns RUS

Top priority interventions

1 - Western Orbital plus

Route Table	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No
6.3, 6.9 & 6.11	I-28, I-29, I-55, I-78, I-100, I-104, I-108, I-109	G9, G30, G37, G41	O-5

The time scale proposed in the draft RUS is too long. The freight route from Stourbridge to Walsall should be constructed during Control Period 5; that is completed before 2019

The proposal outlined in Section 2.4 of the consultation document is a top Regional priority intervention. The impact of this proposal will release significant capacity associated with removing freight from important routes within the West Midlands conurbation. The document gives insufficient emphasis to the excessive capacity that will be used by slow moving freight trains on the Lickey incline (Route Table 6.10) and Old Hill Bank (Route Table 6.3). Another severe constraint is lumbering freight trains crossing the Wolverhampton corridor (Route Table 6.6) from the Galton Jct to the Soho Loop line. Not convinced that freight growth potential has been considered at the existing yards on this line. In addition no consideration appears to have been given to passenger services on this proposed route with additional stations serving communities such as Dudley that do not at present have a rail service.

2 – Double track Leamington to Coventry

Route Table	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No
6.8	I-5 to I-7, I-10, I-71 to I-75	G16, G17, G27, G45	O-17, O-18

Doubling the track from Leamington to Coventry is a top Regional priority intervention. The mainly single track route from Coventry to Leamington Spa is a constraint to every service using the line and double tracking throughout is an essential intervention. It does not all have to be done in one scheme but this would reduce disruption to services. In addition to existing service patterns with the operators aspirations to increase freight flows and Cross-Country services there needs to be provision to extend the Birmingham to Coventry local service to Kenilworth and Chiltern services to Coventry. The aim should be an evenly spaced 15 minute service frequency on this corridor with all the new local services calling at Kenilworth.

3- Improve Capacity Walsall to Rugeley Trent Valley including electrification

Route Table	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No
6.9	I-78 to I-84	G30, G31, G32	O-5, O-31 & O-32, O-32a

The electrification of this route is a top priority Regional intervention. This scheme was inadequately promoted in the Electrification RUS despite meeting all four of the criteria set,

- Diverted passenger trains (in the BR era the line was extensively used for the diversion of trains between Birmingham and Stafford. Virgin and Cross-Country have not used this route but prefer to reverse at Nuneaton involving a significant time penalty and conversion to diesel traction for the Nuneaton to Birmingham section).
- New Services. (The through service from Birmingham to Stafford via Rugeley was recently withdrawn because space could not be found for slow DMU's following the West Coast route upgrading – Dec 2008 timetable).
- Housing plans and the need to enhance capacity suggest a total route modernisation is appropriate.
- There are severe gradients on this route that restrict DMU speeds.
- It is an isolated Diesel service in a predominantly electrified area; it presents operational difficulties particularly when all other services to Walsall are worked by electric trains.

4 – Improve the capacity of Crane Street Jct Wolverhampton

Route Table	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No
6.6 & 6.7	I-53 to I-56, I-68, I-70	G19, G23, G26	O-17b, O-20, O-24 & O-27

As a minimum we suggest that Network Rail should identify the land take and ensures this is appropriately designated by the City Council Planning Department.

The approach to Wolverhampton from the Stour Valley line (from Birmingham) has a number of constraints; principally Curvature; line is on a viaduct and there is a slow speed junction at Crane Street. Immediately to the east of the junction the line passed through a foundry that had industrial activity on both sides of the track. This foundry has closed and the site has been cleared. An opportunity now exists to undertake some improvements to the alignment of the approach tracks and add additional running lines.

The outline business case for this scheme is,

- Line speed improvements
- Service resilience by remodelling the junction to provide access from the Stour Valley line to all platforms in Wolverhampton station
- Improved utilisation of Wolverhampton station capacity
- Improved Junction capacity
- An opportunity to dispose of the low viaduct that crosses the former foundry site
- Brings into beneficial use a site with poor road and public access which is probably contaminated.

5 – Improvements at Hereford and its environs.

Route Table	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No
6.3	I-30, I-35	G10, G11	O-12, O-13

The RUS needs to address operational and capacity constraints at Hereford and the western approach route from Ledbury.

There is a significant operational constraint at Hereford station which, together with the long single line from Ledbury can lead to reactionary delays to services running west of Worcester.

Both London Midland services from Birmingham and Great Western HSTs from London terminate at Hereford; but have to run beyond the station into Edgar Street sidings to reverse. This delay prevents a late running train from making a quick turn around. We suggest that additional signals should be provided so that trains can return north directly from platforms 1 and 2 at Hereford. A limited re-doubling of the single line near to Shelwick Junction may also be beneficial.

6 – Capacity for Freight in the Whitacre - Kingsbury area

Route Table	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No
6.11	I-101, I-104	G37	O-38

The RUS should engage with the provision of infrastructure for freight in this area.

A recognised capacity constraint (para 3.8.2) is the running lines being obstructed by freight trains accessing the Kingsbury terminal. This will become more acute with the proposed increases in train frequency on the Birmingham - Tamworth and Nuneaton corridors. The complexity of this issue is recognised in the RUS and it is suggested this should be tackled with more vigour. A priority is to add a chord at Whitacre Jct to enable freight from the Nuneaton line to access Kingsbury without reversing. The advantages of addressing this issue during CP4 are

- Eliminating unnecessary train miles accessing turning back sidings
- Eliminating unnecessary freight paths releases capacity
- Avoids environmental problems associated with reversals adjacent to a residential area at Whitacre
- Releases main line capacity at Kingsbury where freight from the NE reverse blocking the Derby - Birmingham Main Line
- Avoids the need to provide access to Kingsbury Terminal from the north as freight could be routed via the new Whitacre Chord and Leicester

7 - Passenger access and egress from Marylebone Station

The RUS needs to identify the inadequacies of Marylebone station.

Passenger access and egress from Marylebone station is becoming increasingly congested. A long term strategic plan should be developed with Transport for London and other partners to identify how this can be dealt with. If it is not practical to improve the capacity at Marylebone can an alternative terminal station be used? Can an interchange be developed perhaps at West Hampstead to provide passengers with better access into London? This is a problem that needs a 'blue sky' thinking approach.

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Part 2 - Priority Interventions

Table 6.1 Aylesbury Corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I -1	G-1	O-1 & O-2	Aylesbury corridor capacity and service mix.	Also applies to High Wycombe - London
I -4	G 2	O- 4	North-South Links in Buckinghamshire, particularly connectivity of Aylesbury	Addressed by East West Rail proposals for Milton Keynes – Aylesbury – High Wycombe services

Table 6.2 Leamington Spa and Chiltern corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I -5	G 16	O- 17 & O-18	Overcrowding: Bournemouth – Thames Valley – Banbury – Leamington Spa – Coventry – Birmingham International – Birmingham New Street – Manchester	Also routing Southampton/Reading – Newcastle services via Coventry achieves better balance of loading and doubles frequency south from Coventry / Birmingham International
I - 13	G 17	O-19	Seven-day timetable required based on Sunday demand levels for long distance Inter-regional routes within the scope of the West Midlands and Chilterns RUS.	Earliest Sunday arrivals (both XC & Chiltern in Birmingham and London (currently about 10 30 at both) should be earlier especially for onward connections.
I-19 & 20	G 4	O- 6 & O-7	Leamington Spa and Chiltern capacity.	Train lengthening achievable without platform lengthening.

Table 6.3 Stourbridge Line

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-35			Hereford station	Improve the capacity of this station.
I-30, I-31& I-32	G10, G11	O-14	Train lengthening	Use often claimed advantage of DMU to extend trains by one coach. The new class 172 appear to be capable of this and additional carriages need to be added as necessary.
I-36	G12	O-13	Irregular train frequency in the evenings and generally at Kidderminster. Overcrowding (fig 3.11)	Review timetable Impose appropriate time tables on the two TOCs on this line Extra trains to Rowley Regis, extend Stourbridge terminators to Kidderminster.

Table 6.4 Stratford upon Avon corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-39 & I-40	G14	O-16	Service and Capacity issues to Stratford upon Avon	This is primarily a to - from Birmingham via Henley issue. Seems inappropriate to include in the Chiltern timetable study G4

Table 6.5 Coventry Corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-5 to I-7, I-10 I-46	G16,G20	O-17b, O-18b	Congestion Coventry – Leamington. Cross-Country service frequencies and overcrowding	Top priority Regional scheme to double track the Coventry – Leamington line In addition significant freight benefits should not be overlooked.
1.43	G16	O-17a,	Local service overcrowding	Review allocation of additional vehicles for West Coast.
I-73	G27	O-18	Coventry line local service pathing constraints	If major improvement not possible until HS2 opens this RUS document should state this

Table 6.6 Stafford and Wolverhampton corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-60	G20a	O-21	Poor local service between the Potteries and the West Midlands	The proposed new semi-fast Birmingham - Manchester service via Stone, Stoke-on-Trent and Congelton is very welcome.
I-65	G23	O-24	Wolverhampton capacity	Crane Street Jct is a top priority intervention. In addition consider providing a bay platform when the signal box has been removed
I-55	G19	O-5	Galton Jct to Soho Triangle capacity	The implementation of the Western Orbital scheme is the no 1 Regional priority. This gap needs to be included in the business case.
I-64			New housing and industry	Closing the gap is not appropriate. There are a number of proposals for housing development in this corridor. There is a new proposal for Bushbury (Goodyear site) that will generate significant traffic and could provide Section 106 funds for a station. The RUS team needs to keep this under review.

Table 6.7 Shrewsbury Line

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-67 to I-69	G25, G26	O-27b	Uneven service spacing, Overcrowding	Improve service frequency from Telford to Wolverhampton. Use often claimed advantage of DMU to extend trains by one coach, the new class 172 appear to be capable of this and additional carriages need to be added as necessary.
I-68	G26		Inadequate peak services	Stations between Telford and Wolverhampton serve sizable communities and business has grown in recent years. There is a need for a much improved commuter services
			Telford Growth	Not convinced the significant planned growth of Telford has been included

Table 6.8 Leamington Spa to Nuneaton corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-5 to I-7, I-10, I-71 to I-75	G16, G17, G27, G45	O-17, O-18	Traffic constraint – double tracking required	Top priority Regional intervention

Table 6.9 Cannock and Walsall corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-83 & I-84	G32,	O-32	Aldridge and Brownhills area No rail service.	Study and provision of Aldridge station need to be accelerated Through services from Aldridge to Birmingham New Street and International preferred. NB - Brownhills and Burntwood pop 30,000.

Table 6.10 Cross City and Lickey corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-30	G10	O-33	Bromsgrove capacity	Para 4.1.2.5 and 4.2.1.6, a disaster if not implemented during CP4.
	G10	O12, O-13, O-14 & O-34	Worcester constraints	Urge the production of a Worcester rail development plan. (Para 4.3.1) Support diesel services from this route running through New Street to Tamworth and Birmingham International
			Worcester Park and Ride	Understand that for various reasons the Norton Interchange option is not being pursued. This should be stated. We give priority to Bromsgrove improvements followed by park and ride at Fernhill Heath, the latter is included in the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy document of 2010

Table 6.11 Derby, Nuneaton and Camp Hill corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-108, I-128	G38	O-38a	Capacity Plymouth - Edinburgh	Welcome train lengthening but earlier implementation needed.
I-114	G39	O-39a	Birmingham - Tamworth, suppressed demand	Earliest possible start needed for 2 tph local service from Tamworth, to meet high demand levels. Important to follow on with additional stations and a more frequent service as CENTRO proposal
		O-39b	Camp Hill Chords	Very important for a new 3 tph service via Kings Heath and to Tamworth
I-107, I-108 & I-114	G38, G39	O-40	Derby line capacity	Consider running some Birmingham to Nottingham trains via Leicester and East Midlands Parkway.

I-112			Leicester line capacity	Divert some Birmingham Nottingham trains via Leicester. Leicester has a larger pop than Derby
I-113	Para 6.5.12		Stansted Airport Train capacity	Not appropriate to couple class 170s together as suggested. Imperative there is access though the train for catering and to avoid overcrowding in one unit when the other has seats.

Table 6.12 Sutton Park Corridor - All interventions have equal weight.

Table 6.13 Birmingham New Street

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-123	G42	O-42	New Street Platform capacity	Suggest planning for extending and using the eastern bay platform (East Dock, 13a) for terminating Derby / Leicester local services. ,

Table 6.14 Generic gaps

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-133	G43		Inconsistent services in the evenings and on Sundays	We welcome table 6.28. Top priority for improvement is evening services to Stratford upon Avon and Saturday – Sunday services at Bromsgrove Unclear what criteria are to be applied to determine priority order for improvement. Suggest stating improvement criteria.
I-136	G46		Car Parking	Present contract arrangements extremely unsatisfactory. Car Parking charges should be regulated. NB charge to a 1st class commuter to London on expense account not appropriate for off peak shopper – leisure trips. eg situation at Tamworth, Lichfield Trent Valley

I-135			Through Services to Airports (East Midlands and Gatwick)	It is nonsense that there are no through services from the countries second City to the countrys second largest airport, Gatwick. Please find ways of providing through services from West Midlands to Leicester and East Midlands Airport. .
I-113			Generic Gaps in services	Routes needing particular attention are Kidderminster, Shrewsbury and Stratford on Avon

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Part 3- Additional interventions

Table 6.1 Aylesbury Corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-01 & I-02	G1	O-1, O-2	Improved connectivity to London public transport	Improved interchanges eg investigate West Hampstead where 3 routes are close together

Table 6.2 Leamington Spa and Chiltern corridor

Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
I-26	Papa 4.3.8		Snow Hill station capacity	The Metro is scheduled to be removed from platform 4 during the life of this RUS and its reinstatement for heavy rail is required to address congestion and overcrowding issues. The RUS should support the reinstatement of platform 4 immediately the Metro is removed

Table 6.5 Coventry Corridor & Table 6.8 Leamington Spa to Nuneaton corridor

Route	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
6.5 & 6.8				Congestion at Coventry station	Upgrade and electrify sidings on Leamington line to remove terminating trains from Coventry station.

Table 6.11 Derby, Nuneaton and Camp Hill corridor

Route	Gap Issue	Consolidated Gap	Option No	Gap described	Comments
6.11	I-107	G38		Acceleration of Nottingham - Birmingham services	The West Midlands and Chilterns RUS was designated to take the lead on some Cross-Country routes including Cardiff - Nottingham (page 18) and we are disappointed to read that the long held stakeholder aspirations for a faster service on this route have not been discussed in the draft RUS. The possibility of diverting this service to run via Leicester, avoiding reversal at Derby, has already been mentioned above and would also address a capacity shortfall between Leicester and Nottingham mentioned in the East Midlands RUS.

Lack of Consultation query.

We note that in a number of paragraphs this RUS mentions that most of the Cross-Country routes had been covered by recommendations in other recent RUS's and these comments noted. The exception is the Cardiff - Nottingham route for which the West Midlands & Chilterns RUS was expected to take the lead. This RUS notes that the team is still working on this and expect to make some suggestions in the Final RUS. There should be an opportunity to comment on these suggestions.