

**Promoting Quality Public Transport
in the East Midlands.....**



Please reply to:

The Secretary

26 July 2011

Freepost RSLX-UCGZ-UKSS
High Speed Rail Consultation
PO Box 59528
London SE21 9AX

Dear Consultation Manager

**RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION
HIGH SPEED RAIL: INVESTING IN BRITAIN'S FUTURE**

This response is concerned mainly with Part 1, the proposed strategy, and makes only brief comments on aspects of the route between London and the West Midlands.

PART 1 THE PROPOSED HIGH SPEED RAIL STRATEGY

Q1 Strategy and wider context

We agree that there is a strong case for enhancing the capacity and performance of Britain's inter-city rail network.

Q2 The case for high speed rail

We agree that a high speed network from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester (the Y network) would provide the best value for money solution for increasing capacity on the north-south routes, and would be superior to relying solely on upgrades to the existing network. The capacity released on existing routes, including the Midland Main Line, would facilitate the development of services from London to intermediate points, also local and regional services and freight.

TravelWatch East Midlands represents passengers from the whole of the region, but HS2 will only benefit those within range of the proposed East Midlands station on the route to Leeds. Nevertheless we support the Y network concept in principle due to its benefits in linking the North West and North East to London.

Q3 How to deliver the proposed network

We agree with the Government's proposals for a phased roll-out of a high speed network, starting with the London-West Midlands line and followed by extensions to Manchester and Leeds. We

"TravelWatch East Midlands" is the public name of the East Midlands Passenger Transport Users Forum

Secretary: Mr Stephen Abbott, 5, Monroe Close, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 7QN

Tel: 01858 466629 E-mail: s.abbott3@btinternet.com

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support the concept of serving Heathrow Airport eventually by a spur, and a direct link from HS2 to HS1 to facilitate international services. Nevertheless we have several concerns which are discussed as follows.

Provision of a station in the East Midlands on the branch to Leeds should deliver welcome reductions in journey times, not only to London but also to South and West Yorkshire and beyond. However, it is important to note that the East Midlands does not have a single city as its focus, but is centred on the three cities Leicester, Derby and Nottingham. A high speed station serving the region cannot be close to all three cities and is unlikely to be located very near to any one of them. Without wishing to pre-judge the outcome of current development of the route for the Leeds branch, the station will most likely be sited roughly mid-way between Derby and Nottingham and at a somewhat greater distance from Leicester.

Good connections, by heavy rail or light rail, will be necessary between the three cities and the HS2 station. Even so, for many journeys such as from the city centres or the “wrong” side of the cities to London, HS2 will offer no improvement compared to current (2011) services on the Midland Main Line (MML). If it takes, say, 20-30 minutes to reach the HS2 station, and around 55 minutes thence to London the total journey time allowing for interchange will be 80-90 minutes. At present St Pancras can be reached by MML from Nottingham in 99 minutes, Derby in 92 minutes, and Leicester in 68 minutes, times set to reduce by several minutes once currently funded upgrading work is complete. HS2 is likely to be particularly unattractive for Leicester, especially if there is the disincentive (real and psychological) of travelling north to the HS2 station in order to go south to London.

Many businesses in the three cities are within walking distance, or a short taxi/bus/tram ride, of the station. Visitors from London will be discouraged if they have to transfer at the HS2 station to a connecting service, even if this is of high quality. HS2 will not benefit the East Midlands if it makes access to city centre businesses more difficult and will not be sustainable if it leads to substantial increases in local car traffic.

For these reasons we do not want the development of HS2 to blight the further development of the MML. In the consultation document paragraph 1.56 states that long distance demand on the MML is expected to double by 2043. Paragraphs 2.84 onwards discuss options for enhancing the three key north-south routes as an alternative to building HS2 - for the MML including provision of new freight loops, reinstatement of multiple tracks on certain sections, and electrification. We believe that even with the building of HS2 much of the forecast traffic growth will occur, given that the MML will better serve some centres than HS2. Enhancement and electrification of the MML is needed now, and must be completed well before HS2 is extended through the East Midlands to Leeds

For journeys from the East Midlands to South and West Yorkshire HS2 should prove attractive compared with the rather slow journeys on existing routes. Current journeys between the East Midlands, the North West and Scotland are also slow and often involve changes of train. We suggest, therefore, that the junction of the arms of the ‘Y’ is made triangular, to permit high speed services from the East Midlands and South Yorkshire to Manchester and beyond.

There have been proposals that a link should be provided from HS2 to the Birmingham-Derby line ahead of the completion of the Leeds branch. This would be welcome in giving an early speeding up of journeys to Derby and Sheffield, providing that it does not compromise other services on the Birmingham-Derby route or prejudice the business case for completing the high speed line throughout to Leeds.

Another concern is the long-term ability of the core route from London to Birmingham to handle services to a multiplicity of destinations. The route is said to have a potential capacity of 14

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(possibly up to 18) trains per hour, but merely mimicking current service patterns on the West Coast Main Line would require 9 trains per off-peak hour, albeit using higher capacity trains to some destinations. The addition of, say, 4 trains per hour to South Yorkshire, Leeds and beyond would use up all (or most) of the remaining capacity.

PART 2 THE PROPOSED ROUTE LONDON – WEST MIDLANDS

Q4 Specification of the line

We agree with the principles and specification used to underpin the route selection process.

Q5 Route for the line

We are unable to comment on local details of the proposed route between London and the West Midlands, but we are pleased that the chosen route minimises journey time, provides a convenient junction point for the eventual Manchester and Leeds branches, and facilitates links to Heathrow and HS1.

Q6 Appraisal of sustainability

We are happy with the approach taken to sustainability

Q7 Blight and compensation

We support the options set out to assist those whose properties lose a significant amount of value.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Abbott", written over a horizontal line.

Stephen Abbott
Hon Secretary

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About *TravelWatch East Midlands*

TravelWatch East Midlands, like its namesakes within other regions of England, is a federation of public transport user groups representing the consumer interest across all modes of public transport. We have developed good relationships with our bus, train, tram and airport operators as well as local and regional government and Passenger Focus.

Our officers are all volunteers, and we offer our experience and success in representing public transport users in our communities as an input to future business, economic and policy development involving the transport sector.