



RESPONSE TO EAST MIDLANDS ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY - DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

This response concerns the RUS options which affect passenger train services within and to and from the East Midlands. Our comments also reflect the Transport Policies adopted in the East Midlands Regional Plan. We are disappointed that there is no reference in the RUS to the concurrent review of the Transport section of the Regional Plan.

2. DIMENSIONS

We accept the geographic scope of the RUS but stress the importance of the linkages to other studies and workstreams. In particular, the central location of the East Midlands means that there are links with several other regional RUS.

3. CURRENT CAPACITY DEMAND AND DELIVERY

We suggest that Figure 3.2 – External Demand is expanded to break out travel to/from Scotland (and possibly Wales and the South West) if only to demonstrate the low levels of current flows. The legend should at least say what “others” represents. A comment in the text on the relatively low flows to/from the North West would be useful.

Figure 3.1 – Most Used Stations should be complemented by a similar list of Least Used Stations, to encourage debate on service levels and likely future demand.

Table 3.2 – Historic Growth should make clear that the figures for Bedford, Luton and Luton Airport Parkway relate only to passengers using Long Distance High Speed (LDHS) services, and not the total flows from these stations.

Figure 3.14 – Current Level of Standing understates the problem on the Liverpool-Norwich route by excluding Fridays, and could be seen as an attempt to play the issue down. A separate chart for Fridays (and ideally Saturdays and Sundays) should be included.

Car Parking – it is disappointing that no detailed information is given about car parking provision and demand, but we are pleased that work has now been commissioned from Passenger Focus and ourselves to address this point.

4. ANTICIPATED CHANGES IN SUPPLY AND DEMAND

We believe that demand for travel on the Norwich-Liverpool route, west of Nottingham, will increase more rapidly than predicted. Alternative rail routes to the North West via Stoke or Crewe are less attractive since the splitting of the former Nottingham-Crewe service at Derby and the elimination of fast connections, via Nuneaton, from Leicester and beyond. Alternative road routes are increasingly congested or (in the case of roads through the Peak District) constrained by attempts to discourage through traffic including reductions in speed limits.

5. GAPS AND OPTIONS

Options 1.1, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7 – LDHS services

We support these options to increase the capacity of LDHS services on the Midland Main Line but are not convinced that suitable rolling stock will become available in the short to medium term.

Options 1.8 and 1.9 – local services

We support these options to lengthen peak services but suggest that the situation is kept under review as, with changes in demand and revised timetable patterns since December 2008 there will have been changes to where and when trains are crowded.

Option 2.1 – Liverpool-Norwich

We support this option but the suggestion of implementation by 2019 is completely unrealistic. We urge that additional rolling stock for this route is provided as soon as any diesel multiple unit resource nationally becomes available, for example trains cascaded by the forthcoming new build of Class 172 trains.

Option 2.4 – Birmingham-Stansted Airport

We support the selection of this option in preference to option 2.2 or 2.3. However, platform extensions at Whittlesea and Manea would be a better long-term solution than fitting selective door opening to some Class 170 trains which would lead to problems of diagramming a mixed fleet. Alternatively, the few daily calls by CrossCountry trains at these stations could be transferred to National Express East Anglia or East Midlands Trains services, which are predominantly two car trains.

Options 3.1 and 3.2 – infrastructure for freight trains

We support these options inasmuch as they are necessary to secure the future performance of passenger services and contribute to the Seven Day Railway. In particular, redoubling the line between Kettering North Junction and Corby would allow the full timetabled service to be operated on those Sundays when trains are diverted between Kettering and Leicester via Manton. At present such diversions require a reduction to two trains hourly in each direction, with a risk of reactionary delays due to the single line section.

Options 4.1 – improved journey times London-Sheffield

We support the inclusion of this option in the CP4 Delivery Plan, but are concerned that, due to financial constraints, the work done will be less than is desirable to deliver the

maximum long term benefits. For example, the suggested line speed improvement at Market Harborough is from 60 mph to 85 mph, which we understand allows the retention of the flyover bridge over the former Peterborough line. A complete realignment using the available disused trackbed to eliminate this bridge and smooth the reverse curves might permit a higher speed and would reduce maintenance costs.

Option 4.2 – improved journey times Birmingham-Stansted Airport

We support the development of this option for CP5, but again stress the importance of a scheme between Syston and Wigston which gives long term value rather than minimum cost.

Option 4.3 – improved journey time Nottingham-Birmingham

We support the development of a scheme of infrastructure works for CP5. However, we doubt the value of major work at Burton-on-Trent to speed up non-stopping services, given that a majority of trains call there. We suggest that a timetabling study for this route, to reduce the frequent instances of waiting outside Derby and Birmingham for a platform, should be a precursor to any linespeed works.

We note and welcome the aspiration to remove some pathing time in the Nottingham and Trent areas following CP4 works, at present non-stop CrossCountry trains between Nottingham and Derby and vice versa have the same journey time as those which make intermediate stops.

Option 4.4 – improved journey time East Midlands-North West

We are disappointed that no option has been identified which appears to be cost effective. In particular, we are astonished that while extending St Pancras-Derby trains is seen as good value for money (option 4.7), and provision of a third hourly Sheffield-Manchester train is recommended in Yorkshire & Humber RUS option HV3, combining the two to provide much-needed Leicester-Loughborough-Derby-Manchester through trains apparently gives a poor return! We ask that this issue is re-examined.

Option 4.5 – improved journey time Nottingham-Leeds

We support the recommended further development of this option.

Option 4.6 – improved journey time Nottingham-Lincoln

We support the further development of this option under the RFA process. The through service Leicester-Nottingham-Lincoln has poor overall journey times, especially eastbound, due to lengthy waits at Nottingham. We suggest that a timetabling exercise is carried out in conjunction with the CP4 infrastructure works in the Trent and Nottingham areas, and the increase in speed on the slow lines between Leicester and Trent. In addition we suggest that the stopping pattern at lightly-used stations east of Nottingham is reviewed. We also believe that restoration of through services between Birmingham and Lincoln is desirable, preferably via Derby. Lincoln is the largest centre in the region with no direct trains from the West Midlands. In the short term this would require joint cross-franchise services, which although rare are not unknown.

Option 4.7 – more frequent trains between London and Sheffield

We support this option which will give additional stations in the region a through service to Sheffield.

Option 4.8 – more frequent trains Bedford, north Northamptonshire and the north

We support the recommended option 4 (b), and ask that it is implemented as soon as there are sufficient benefits from the linespeed works between St Pancras and Trent Junction.

Option 4.9 – more frequent trains between Peterborough and Lincoln

We believe that it is disingenuous to charge the cost of additional rolling stock to this Option, creating in consequence a low BCR. The rolling stock which is used for the current 10 hour operating day could operate for a full day with no additional leasing cost. If the rolling stock is used for part of the day on other services then its cost should properly be charged to those services. We question whether, for example, lightly used token evening services between Lincoln and Doncaster are a better use for rolling stock than evening services between Peterborough and Lincoln.

We suggest that the whole group of Lincolnshire local services (some of which fall within the scope of the Yorkshire & Humber RUS) is re-examined, especially with the prospective introduction of two-hourly through trains between Kings Cross and Lincoln from December 2010.

Option 5.1- Additional infrastructure at Loughborough

We accept that provision of an additional Up slow platform at Loughborough does not represent good value. The priority at this station is to extend the Fast line platforms.

Option 5.3 – flyover at Newark

We support the further development of this Option.

Option 5.4 – remodelled layout at Derby

We look forward to the conclusions in the final RUS once appraisal of the options has been completed. Some of the apparent problems are due to timetables that build in recovery time awaiting a platform at Derby, and allow for the recent station rebuilding. However, we wish to see the options appraised but do not support option 4 (a), provision of a bay platform next to platform 1 for the Crewe service, as our aspiration is for this service to be extended to Nottingham.

Emerging strategy

We support the emerging strategy subject to comments made concerning the recommended options.

6.7 Seven Day Railway

We support the proposed measures which will facilitate the Seven Day Railway. However, we would like to see a stated policy of diversion of longer distance inter-regional services such as Liverpool-Norwich and Birmingham Stansted Airport when

parts of their route is disrupted, rather than sole reliance on replacement buses over a journey segment. (It was pleasing to note that at weekends in summer 2009, when the Leicester-Peterborough line was closed, Birmingham-Stansted Airport trains were diverted via Nottingham, albeit at reduced frequency and without picking up in Nottingham when the Nottingham – Derby line was bus substituted!).

Furthermore, we would like a policy of making passengers aware of alternative rail journeys (without penalty) to avoid buses on their normal route. For example, if the Sheffield-Manchester line is closed, passengers from Nottingham to Liverpool might prefer to travel via Crewe or Birmingham, rather than train-bus-train via Sheffield.

6.8 30-year vision

We are surprised that no mention is made of possible reopening of lines and stations, as identified in the recent ATOC Connecting Communities study. Some cases, for example Ilkeston station, have been shown to have a high BCR. There is no mention of the prospective reinstatement of the Oxford-Cambridge East-West link, which will interact with the Midland Main Line in the Bedford/Luton area.

Other than in Northamptonshire, there is no mention of a need or demand to serve major housing development, whether it be at already announced growth points (e.g. Newark) or at other places (e.g. Coalville, Heanor) suggested in the concurrent Options consultation on the partial review of the East Midlands Regional Plan.

General comments

The draft RUS appears to be based on sound research and gives a good overview of the current rail services on the defined network and their utilisation. The emerging strategy shows how growing passenger demand can be accommodated, but there is vagueness in the solutions because of inter-dependency with issues such as the strategic freight network, major infrastructure schemes and electrification on which decisions have yet to be taken.

The strategy is also too focussed on development of the current network of services as it stands. There is a lack of ambition concerning the development of better inter-regional services from the East Midlands and restoring inter-urban linkages broken several years ago simply to improve train performance. Better links to the key cities of Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester remain a passenger priority, as does improved connectivity with the West Coast Main Line and better services from Lincoln. We would like to see these aspirations recorded even if fulfilment falls partly beyond the RUS period into the 30-year timeframe.

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