

West Midlands Franchise Consultation Document June 2006

Response from TravelWatch East Midlands

This response comments only on those aspects of the draft franchise specification which will affect passengers travelling from and to the East Midlands.

SECTION 5. PROPOSED BASE CASE SPECIFICATION

West Coast Main Line services

TravelWatch welcomes the proposed introduction of the new hourly semi-fast service between Euston, Northampton and Crewe. This will provide much improved journey opportunities from Northampton and Long Buckby to Trent Valley stations and beyond, also from other East Midlands stations via connections at Nuneaton or Tamworth. We support the proposed extension of some workings to Liverpool.

Northampton-Birmingham

We welcome the proposed restoration of two trains per hour throughout the day on this busy route.

West Midlands local service groups

We welcome retention of the present hourly stopping service between Birmingham and Leicester. It is essential that this route serving an important East Midlands-West Midlands gateway operates at even service intervals with Birmingham-Stansted Airport trains operated by the new Cross Country franchise, to give a half-hourly service between Birmingham and Leicester. We also wish to see provision of adequate capacity for peak loadings.

The Coventry-Nuneaton route provides a link for inter-urban and inter-regional journeys between Coventry, also stations to Oxford, Reading and Bournemouth, and the East Midlands. Timings should be adjusted to give improved connectional times at Nuneaton for Leicester. At present these are too tight in the westbound direction and too lax eastbound. Trains should be held for, say, up to 10 minutes at Nuneaton, and if practicable at Coventry, to maintain connections without penalty under the performance regime.

Other comments

A principal inter-regional route from the East Midlands: Leicester-Birmingham will be operated by the West Midlands and Cross Country franchises rather than the East Midlands franchise. The franchisee for the West Midlands should be required to cooperate with the operator of the Cross Country franchise, and the operator of the East Midlands franchise, in the interests of securing an integrated rail service for passengers.

Stephen Abbott
Honorary Secretary
TracelWatch East Midlands
2 August 2006