

Meeting **JOINT COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRANSPORT**

Date **18 SEPTEMBER 2009** Agenda item number:

From: **JOINT OFFICER STEERING GROUP**

RAIL ISSUES UPDATE

Purpose of report

1. To update the Committee on key rail issues in and into the Greater Nottingham Local Transport Plan (LTP) area and rail services cross local authority boundaries. The work of the two Councils, although separate, is complementary, and of mutual benefit.

Infrastructure schemes

2. Work continues on the schemes and studies reported to the last Joint Committee meeting, including:
 - a scheme to raise speeds at the southern end of the Robin Hood Line (RHL), between Sutton Forest and just north of Mansfield Woodhouse;
 - a similar scheme to raise linespeeds at the northern end of the RHL;
 - a study of whether it is possible to re-instate double track between Kirkby and Bulwell;
 - a study into raising the speed on the Nottingham to Grantham line, so as to reduce journey times and enable a very substantial increase in service to Aslockton, Radcliffe and Netherfield;
 - a study of the possibility of re-opening the RHL to Ollerton;
 - a scheme to transform the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln line, with speeds raised to 90mph;but there has been insufficient time since July's meeting for any conclusive developments. Progress will be reported in full to the next Joint Committee meeting.

Nottingham Station Hub scheme

3. Hub officers and Councillor Urquhart met Chris Mole, the new Rail Minister at the Department for Transport (DfT) on 22 July 2009 to seek government support for a modified financing approach that would release rail industry funding necessary to move the Hub project into the tendering stage. The meeting was positive and further discussions with DfT Rail Strategy and Government Office officials and Network Rail are being held in order to maintain the existing programme which targets a November 2009 Network Rail Board approval to commence tendering the main scheme. In parallel design work for incremental improvements including relocated hackney taxi facilities and a new secure cycle parking facility within the Milk Dock are advancing.

Midland Main Line upgrade

4. In January 2007 the County Council lodged a formal bid for funding to upgrade the Midland Main Line (MML). This proposal was taken forward by Network Rail.
5. In July 2007, DfT published a White Paper titled Delivering a Sustainable Railway¹, and associated documents, which constituted the statutory High Level Output Specification (HLOS). The DfT High Level Output Specification - Specimen Capacity Options stated that 'options were developed by DfT, and modelled in the Network Modelling Framework (NMF), to demonstrate that the HLOS output metric requirements can be delivered within the Statement of Funds Available', and went on to specify 4 requirements for long distance (InterCity) services, one of which was MML - Reduced journey times of between 7 and 8 minutes on the MML for all services operating between London and Derby as a result of line speed improvements from infrastructure enhancement.²
6. On 31 October 2008, ORR published its Periodic Review 2008: Determination of Network Rail's outputs and funding for 2009 - 2014, which included enhancement schemes. This confirmed the outputs required for the Midland Main Line scheme, and under a heading Enhancements in England and Wales required to give full effect to the HLOS, listed 4 schemes which provide journey time improvements, one of which was St Pancras to Sheffield line speed improvements: a package of track, signalling and junction remodelling to reduce journey times by around 10 minutes.³
7. On 8 July 2009, Network Rail reported that the sum available was now £69 million, but that the works it would be possible to do for that £69 million would only reduce train running times by 5 minutes northbound and 4 minutes southbound.
8. Based on the statements quoted above, these smaller time reductions would not meet the specified requirements of the Office of Rail Regulation's Periodic Review, nor the DfT's High Level Output Statement. Nor would it allow the standard Nottingham to London journey time to be reduced to 90 minutes. However, Network Rail claims that in recent discussions, ORR has accepted that the works Network Rail now proposes would meet what is required.

This is clearly an enormous issue for the whole East Midlands. EMRA and emda are urgently seeking confirmation from ORR that Network Rail is required to reduce (St Pancras to Sheffield) journey times by around 10 minutes.

¹ HMSO, Command 7176

² High Level Output Specification - Specimen Capacity Options, section 2 (page 2) DfT, July 2007

³ ORR Periodic Review Determination of Network Rail's outputs and funding for 2009-2014, October 2008, para 9.105.

Electrification

9. On 15 May 2009 Network Rail published, for consultation, a draft Electrification Strategy which assessed the case for electrification across the British Rail network.
10. The strategy reported that just two routes – MML and the Great Western Main Line (GWML) ‘have high benefit to cost ratios. Indeed they potentially involve a net industry cost saving rather than a net cost’ as ‘the requirement for upfront investment would be offset by lifetime cost savings, largely in the costs of train operation’.
11. The draft strategy highlighted the especially strong business case for the Midland Main Line, with the Benefit Cost Ratio for the MML either better than or, at worst, equal to the BCR for the GWML ‘in the case of the Midland Main Line the value (for money) is technically infinite given that it involves a net cost saving rather than a cost. The GWML BCR lies in the range from high value for money to financially positive over the appraisal period, depending upon Inter City Express Project cost assumptions’.⁴
12. The MML is the only route for which the BCR is unambiguously a positive financial case without needing any other route to be electrified before it.⁵ This means that, to comply with the key factor of Prioritisation of those routes which have the strongest business case, the MML should be electrified first. If any other route, including the GWML, was to be electrified before the MML then it would breach the strategy’s principle of prioritising the route with the strongest business case.
13. On 23 July 2009, DfT published a White Paper titled Britain’s Transport Infrastructure - Rail Electrification which proposed electrifying two lines:
 - the GWML from London to Bristol, Swansea and Newbury; and
 - Liverpool to Manchester.
14. Regarding the MML, the White Paper stated ‘Further detailed analysis is now ongoing on the other routes identified by Network Rail, and we are looking intensively at the costs and benefits of electrifying the MML between London and Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield, as well as the routes between Manchester and Preston, and Liverpool and Preston, as shown in Figure 9. The Department will continue to work with stakeholders to review these schemes’.⁶

⁴ page 76

⁵ Table 6.5, page 68 shows that one other route, the Berks & Hants, could also have a positive financial case, but that only becomes true after the costs of electrifying the Cross Country route have been incurred.

⁶ Paragraph 80, page 27

High Speed Rail

15. There is speculation in the media that an announcement will be made very shortly about high speed rail.

Service changes from December 2009

16. Rail timetables change twice per year in May and December. Most services remain the same, but each timetable change date does provide an opportunity to lobby for changes to services. East Midlands Trains (EMT) is currently planning its timetable that will commence on 13 December 2009. The priority issues are:

Nottingham - Newark

17. In December 2008 EMT increased the number of calls at Lowdham, but reduced calls at most other intermediate stations by a couple of trains per day. Unfortunately, one of the two well-used trains into Nottingham in the morning peak no longer calls at the intermediate stations (including Lowdham). In addition, the evening service is sparse, with only 2 trains from Nottingham after 18.30.
18. The Council has therefore requested:
 - an additional train at the start of the morning peak from Newark and all intermediate stations into Nottingham; and
 - an additional train departing Nottingham at 19.30.

Now that the problems at Aslockton have been resolved, this is the County Council's top priority for the December 2009 timetable.

19. EMT initially said it was unable to run the additional morning service as there was no available train set to work such a service. However, the Council has found a way of changing the way EMT uses its trains in the early morning so as to free up a train set.
20. The other obstacle is how to cover the additional operating costs. The Council has asked EMT to quote the cost of operating these two additional trains, and a reply is expected shortly.

Bulwell

21. Sunday services on the RHL have so far not called at Bulwell. EMT say this is because of the trains having to arrive and depart Nottingham at fixed times.
22. The linespeed improvements described above should save sufficient time for Sunday trains to call at Bulwell and still use the fixed slots into and out of Nottingham. This is a City Council priority for the December 2009 timetable.

Mansfield - Skegness direct Sunday service

23. At the request of the Council, on Sundays the first southbound train from Mansfield Woodhouse now continues past Nottingham and runs through to Skegness. In return, the 18.00 from Skegness continues past Nottingham and runs through to Mansfield Woodhouse. This is the first regular direct service between the RHL and Skegness.
24. This service should have commenced on 17 May 2009, but was delayed by a dispute with EMT's drivers, and the official launch of the service finally took place on 12 July 2009.

RECOMMENDATION

25. It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report.

Background Papers

26. Britain's Transport Infrastructure - Rail Electrification, DfT, July 2009

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