

report

meeting: **JOINT COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING AND
TRANSPORT**

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from: **JOINT OFFICERS STEERING GROUP**

RAIL ISSUES UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee on key rail issues for the Greater Nottingham Local Transport Plan (LTP) area.

New East Midlands Franchise

2. The Department for Transport (DfT) announced at the end of June that the new East Midlands franchise has been awarded to Stagecoach, as from 11th November 2007. Unfortunately, much of the detail of the new franchise still remains to be finalised, as it is partly dependent on fitting in with arrangements with a number of other new franchises. However some key aspects of the new service are clear.
3. The service to London is largely unchanged,
 - § There will be one fast train per hour and one semi-fast train, as at present.
 - § The DfT 'baseline' proposal to use shorter length trains, which would have been coupled together at Leicester, has been abandoned as essentially unworkable, because of its inherent vulnerability to unreliability and delay.
 - § It seems that the 'fast' train per hour will be 7 coaches instead of 8 at present, with the 'semi-fast' being 6 coaches instead of 4 at present, so we have avoided the reduction in seating capacity that the DfT baseline proposals had made seem likely few months ago.
 - § Journey times remain unchanged at 1 hour 45 minutes for the fast trains. DfT did not require any speed-up in its specification, its 'baseline proposal' was based on retaining the present 1 hour 45, and there has been no change to that.
 - § The pattern of stops - precisely which intermediate stations the Nottingham trains will call at - is one of the issues still to be determined.

It looks likely that the fast trains will stop at Leicester only. Some of the peak period 'fast' trains may call at other intermediate stations, though probably fewer than at present, thus making peak period journeys slightly faster than at present (though still longer than the 1 hour 45 minutes that is now, and will continue to be, standard for the off-peak trains).

4. There will be improvements on the Robin Hood Line (RHL).

a) Evenings

§ As a direct result of pressure from the County Council, there will be a later weekday evening RHL train from Nottingham. The precise timings are still to be finalised. There will also be a later departure from Worksop at 22.20, to Mansfield and Nottingham (23.30).

b) Sundays

§ Stagecoach has quoted a price of £901,000 to run a Sunday service between December 2008 and April 2015. DfT officials have said so far that it will not pay, and it is up to the Council to find the money. At the request of Alan Meale MP (Mansfield), the Rail Minister, Tom Harris, has agreed for a delegation to meet him, probably in early October, to lobby for DfT to pay.

§ DfT is, quite understandably, concerned that any new service should have the realistic prospect of being well used. The Council has been running an active campaign to gather public support, to show that there is a genuinely high level of demand, and to use as a marketing tool for if and when a Sunday service were to be introduced. The Council has now received around 7000 written expressions of support from members of the public for a Sunday service. We are continuing to collect more expressions of support to maximise the pressure on DfT.

5. Other key improvements are:-

§ There will be a new service every hour from Nottingham to Matlock. This will mean that there are 3 trains per hour (instead of the current 2 per hour) between Nottingham and Derby.

§ There will be more trains calling at Attenborough - and with fewer long gaps in the service.

§ There are likely to be more trains calling at Beeston, but not until part of the Trent resignalling scheme has been completed in December 2009.

All of these improvements were requested by and lobbied for strongly by the County Council.

6. The biggest downside of the new franchise is that most fares (the unregulated fares) are likely to increase by around 25% above at the rate of inflation.
7. It should also be remembered that, from December 2008, a new service is being introduced every hour from Nottingham directly to Leeds. This will be operated by the Northern Trains franchise, not East Midlands. It will also double the frequency of trains from Nottingham to Alfreton, Chesterfield and Sheffield.

Midland Main Line journey time reduction scheme

8. It was reported to June Joint Committee that Network Rail is currently undertaking design works costing £1million, looking at upgrading sections of the Midland Main Line (MML) to allow faster speeds and thus shorter journey times.
9. In July, DfT announced its '*High Level Output Statement*', which sets out the strategic direction for the railway in England and Wales, relating it to the level of funding it receives from Government. Included in the package of specimen options that was used to model and confirm the output requirements was the MML scheme, with "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". This takes the scheme a big step nearer to fruition, as it is the first formal DfT endorsement of the scheme, albeit that it is still conditional and subject to further work before it can be finally agreed.
10. Network Rail continues to refine the design and business case for the scheme. It is expected that this work will be finalised by December 2007. It should then be considered by the Network Rail Investment Board in early 2008 for a final decision to be made. It is only after such a decision that this scheme will be definite.
11. A meeting was held in the House of Commons on Tuesday 25th July. It was better attended than the two previous parliamentary MML meetings, with about 5 MPs (inc Nick Palmer from Broxtowe) and 20 other people present from local authorities and the business community along at the line.
12. Councillor Edwards, from Nottingham City Council, strongly pressed the case for establishing a MML lobby group. It was agreed that Network Rail would initiate and co-ordinate such a lobby group. I will continue to liaise closely with them about this.
13. This scheme had been the subject of previous consideration, but had not been taken forward. Whilst it was the County Council initiative in January

2006 that got Network Rail looking at the scheme again, it should be noted that the scheme has now acquired a real momentum of its own, and it has been Network Rail that has been the driving force for the last 12 months or so. Particular credit should be given to Network Rail's Enhancement Team, and Spencer Gibbens, the Senior Route Enhancement Manager, for their proactive sponsorship of this scheme.

Other rail infrastructure schemes

14. In July 2007 Network Rail completely renewed Trowel junction. The old layout was subject to a very severe 20mph speed restriction, which unnecessarily delayed every train from Nottingham to Sheffield, Manchester, Yorkshire and the north-west by 2 minutes. It would have been possible for the new layout to allow 50mph or even 70mph, and the County Council lobbied strongly for this to be done, but without success. The new layout has had the speed raised slightly to 30mph. This means all journeys are ½ minute faster than hitherto, but are still unnecessarily delayed by slightly over a minute.
15. The County Council continues to work with Network Rail to develop schemes to raise speeds and cut journey times from Nottingham
 - § To Sheffield, Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool,
 - § On the Robin Hood Line, and
 - § To Newark and Lincoln,

Nottingham Station Hub

16. Design development on the Nottingham Station Hub scheme continues apace. Network Rail are committing development funding to the current areas of work to take the project through their GRIP Stage 4 processes and an application has been made to emda for further development funding to take the overall project towards tender stage. The draft business case is nearing completion and options for the multi storey car park and commercial developments are being refined with the help of Nottingham Regeneration Ltd. In view of the new franchise East Midlands Trains have accepted an invitation to be represented on the Station Hub Project Board and Steering Group and are keen to implement "quick wins" at the Station early in their franchise to help support wider Station improvement objectives. As a result City officers are scoping out how cycle parking improvements and changes to taxi circulation can be implemented. A marketing brochure to highlight the objectives of the stakeholders involved in the Nottingham Station Hub, and its synergy with the NET Phase Two project, is being prepared for an early Autumn launch.

Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee note the content of this report

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