

meeting **JOINT COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING & TRANSPORT**

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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. Rail services cross local authority boundaries. The work of the two Councils, although separate, is complementary, and of mutual benefit.

### **Infrastructure schemes**

2. Since the last joint committee meeting, there has been good progress on a number of schemes on which the County Council has been working closely with Network Rail to improve the local railway infrastructure : -
  - A scheme to raise speeds at the southern end of the Robin Hood Line, between Sutton Forest and just north of Mansfield Woodhouse was initiated at the County Council's suggestion. The physical works will cost £360,000 and Network Rail has agreed to fund it in full. The work will start shortly and be completed by December 2009. The primary benefit is that it will reduce the number of late running RHL trains. It should also save sufficient time to allow trains to call at Bulwell on Sundays.
  - Network Rail has been commissioned to undertake a study of the cost of a similar scheme to raise linespeeds at the northern end of the RHL. The results of the study will be reported to the next joint committee meeting.
  - Network Rail has been commissioned to undertake a study of whether it is possible to re-instate double track between Kirkby and Bulwell. The results of the study will be reported to the next joint committee meeting.
  - A study is being initiated into raising the speed on the Nottingham - Grantham line, so as to reduce journey times and enable a very substantial increase in service to Aslockton, Radcliffe, and Netherfield.
  - In response to a submission by the County Council, £51million has been allocated within the Regional Funding Allocation for a transformation of the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln line, with speeds raised to 90mph. The next stage of this scheme is a study of exactly how much could be cut from journey times. The aim of the scheme is to
    - reduce the Newark - Nottingham journey time to 20 minutes,
    - double the train service to Newark, with a train every 30 minutes, including one train per hour from Newark being extended beyond Nottingham to Birmingham, and
    - significantly increase the service to the intermediate stations.

## **Nottingham station resignalling scheme enhancements**

3. As a result of lobbying the Office of Rail Regulation during 2008, funding was approved for substantial enhancements to the track layout at and around Nottingham station.
4. The scheme was considered by the Network Rail Investment Board (NRIB) on 15<sup>th</sup> May. The Investment Board approved the design of the new layout, which will include enhancements costing £11.6million: -
  - All tracks approaching the station will be signalled for trains to run in either direction, rather than each track being one-way only. This will mean that every train will have the option of using any of the 4 tracks, as opposed to just 2 currently. This will give far greater flexibility of operation,
  - There will be additional points and signals, which will give further improved flexibility,
  - The speed of the northern approach will be raised from 35mph to 50mph. This will cut journey times to and from Manchester, Leeds and Mansfield, and
  - Platform 4 will be split into 2 separate sections - a 'bay', and a 'wing', to allow two trains to arrive and depart independently.
5. The overall effect will be a very big increase in capacity and flexibility that will accommodate more trains, and make all trains run faster and more reliably. It will be the biggest enhancement to Nottingham's rail capacity for over 100 years. It should eliminate the need for trains to be stopped outside Nottingham station, and the time penalty that incurs.
6. Detailed design work will be undertaken during 2009 and 2010, with construction starting in 2011 and completed in 2012.
7. The County Council has suggested a way to enable the creation of an additional platform 7, which would increase the capacity and flexibility of the layout even further. This has not been included in the scheme, but possibilities for it are being pursued.

## **Nottingham station Hub scheme**

8. The City Council and EMDA have now committed £25m towards the £64m capital costs of the scheme. Discussions on funding with the rail partners and Department of Transport continue. The economic downturn has caused East Midlands Trains to review how the rail industry contribution should be financed. A meeting between the City Council and Lord Adonis, the new Minister of State for Transport, has been requested in order to discuss a way forward. In the meantime Network Rail are continuing to prepare tender documentation to take the scheme forward and design development is being undertaken on the new secure cycle parking compound within the Milk Dock and a new taxi passenger shelter on Station Street which can be put in place prior to the main Station Hub works going ahead.

## **Midland Main Line upgrade**

9. In January 2007 the County Council lodged a formal bid for funding to upgrade the Midland Main Line. This proposal was taken forward by Network Rail, and in October 2008 the Office of Rail Regulation approved an allocation of £55million pounds to increase speeds and cut journey times.
10. Network Rail has subsequently undertaken a detailed assessment of what can and should be done, and the costs. This detailed work will be reported by Network Rail on 8<sup>th</sup> July, and will be reported to the Joint Committee.
11. Together with the enhancements at Nottingham station, the upgrade should allow a standard Nottingham to London journey time of 90 minutes from December 2012.

## **Electrification**

12. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009, Network Rail published, for consultation, a draft 'Electrification Strategy'. It sets out the benefits of electrification of railways
  - Lower operating costs
  - Enhanced performance
  - Increased capacity,
  - Lower emission of air pollutants, and
  - Lower carbon emissions - and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will decrease further under future plans for electricity generation to become lower carbon
13. The draft Strategy assesses the case for electrification across the British rail network. It identifies around three thousand route miles as having a business case that would justify electrification. The strategy highlights the especially strong business case for the Midland Main Line

*"Two options – the Great Western Main Line and the Midland Main Line – have high benefit to cost ratios. Indeed they potentially involve a net industry cost saving rather than net cost over the appraisal period of 60 years. There would be a requirement for upfront investment by Network Rail but this would be offset by lifetime cost savings, largely in the costs of train operation..... These options, along with a strategic infill scheme – 2 short connecting lines in London – with the best business case are presented as the potential Core Strategy for England and Wales and will be discussed further with the DfT."*
14. However, the strategy states clearly that *"Progression of (any) schemes will be dependent on their affordability"*.
15. It will be important for the East Midlands to mount a strong lobby for the Midland Main Line to be electrified in the first phase of any programme, as there will be competing lobbies from other regions, including those (e.g. Trans-Pennine) which have weaker business cases than the Midland Main Line.

## High Speed Rail

16. The Government has set up a company called High Speed 2 (HS2) to investigate options for the development of a High Speed Rail network (HSR) in England.
17. The remit for HS2 is:
  - Initial focus to be London to the West Midlands, but also potential development beyond the West Midlands
  - How to make best use of increased rail capacity and implications for the design of London to West Midlands section
  - Speed and connectivity
  - Supporting housing and economic growth
  - Potential benefits for freight
  - Environment and climate change
18. Although the initial work is focusing on London to the West Midlands the HS2 company will be making recommendations on future extensions and viability of further line options that will inform any national high speed rail development programme.
19. A number of options are already being put forward by a variety of promoters setting out possible HSR network options but not all the options serve the East Midlands so there is a risk the region could miss out unless a sound economic case is put forward supported through evidence. The City and County Councils are actively developing a 'Proposition' for the East Midlands, and Nottingham in particular, to be part of the network going forward. Contribution to this process, and hopefully support and endorsement, of EMRA, emda and other regional partners is currently being sought. In addition attempting to quantify the cumulative benefits of linking our case to other Core Cities is also being pursued'

## Service changes from December 2009

20. 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 is currently planning its timetable that will commence on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2009. The priority issues are:

### Aslockton

21. In December 2008 East Midlands Trains cut the number of trains that called at Aslockton from 21 to 12 per weekday. The County Council objected, and local residents and the Parish Council lobbied strongly against this. A large petition was presented to the Council.
22. In response EMT re-instated an Aslockton stop in just one of the 9 trains per day from which they had been withdrawn. The County Council therefore requested re-instatement of all the calls as a priority for the May timetable. EMT declined to make any change, but agreed to review the situation.

23. As reported to previous meetings, the County Council believes that there is no justifiable reason for the train service cuts at Aslockton, and that East Midlands trains had simply got this wrong and was damaging both Aslockton passengers' interests and its own revenue. This is in stark contrast to EMT's normal responsiveness to passengers and commercial acumen. The Council determined to take whatever steps it could to get this EMT mistake rectified.
24. In response to the Council's continuing representations, EMT attended a public meeting in Aslockton on 29<sup>th</sup> June, and announced that it was re-instating calls at Aslockton for 8 trains per weekday and 7 on Saturdays, as from December 2009.

*Nottingham - Newark*

25. 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 (inc Lowdham). The Council therefore requested an additional train in the morning peak from Newark and all intermediate stations. Now that the problems at Aslockton have been resolved, this is the County Council's top priority for the December 2009 timetable.
26. EMT is unable to run this additional service at present as it says there is no available train set to work such a service. However, EMT has indicated that in principle it is willing to look at operating such a service subject to suitable rolling stock becoming available and if a way can be found to cover the additional cost of operating it. The Council will continue to work with EMT to try to find a way of making this happen.

*Bulwell*

27. Sunday services on the Robin Hood Line have hitherto not called at Bulwell. East Midlands Trains say this is because of the trains having to arrive and depart Nottingham at fixed times.
28. The linespeed improvements described above should save sufficient time for Sunday trains at call at Bulwell and still use the fixed slots into and out of Nottingham. This is a City Council priority for the December timetable.

*Mansfield - Skegness direct Sunday service*

29. At the request of the Council, on Sundays, the first southbound train from Mansfield Woodhouse will continue past Nottingham and run through to Skegness. In the evening the 18.00 from Skegness will continue past Nottingham and run through to Mansfield Woodhouse. This will be the first ever regular direct service between the Robin Hood Line and Skegness.

30. This service should have commenced on 17<sup>th</sup> May, but was delayed by a dispute with EMT's drivers. The dispute is being resolved, and the official launch of the service is now planned for 12<sup>th</sup> July.

### **Ilkeston station**

31. Construction of a station at Ilkeston is a longstanding aspiration in the Local Transport Plan, and was the element of the 1999 Greater Nottingham Rail Network study that was identified as having the most promise, but there was then no service that could reasonably call there. The introduction in December 2008 of the new Nottingham to Leeds service, initiated by the County Council, provides a potential service that could call at any new Ilkeston station, thereby removing that stumbling block.
32. A study was recently commissioned by Derbyshire CC, with support from Nottinghamshire, into the business case for a new station. The study reported that, if the station was built, it would
- Generate around 120,000 passengers per annum, the majority of whom would be new journeys,
  - Generate revenue of £18.70million over 60 years,
  - Which would be more than sufficient to offset the costs of operating the scheme,
- i.e. once it was built, it would generate a profit.
33. Derbyshire County Council is now considering how the capital cost of construction - around £3million - might be funded.

### **Ollerton**

34. A study has been commissioned to update the report produced in 2000 into the possibility of extending RHL services from Mansfield Woodhouse to Ollerton, in the light of
- the national 50% growth in the use of rail services,
  - new housing and employment developments in Ollerton, and
  - reductions in rail industry unit costs
35. The 2000 study found that an hourly service would be uneconomic, because it would require 2 trains. The linespeed works referred to earlier in the report will enable an hourly service to be operated with just one train set, which reduces costs by 40%. The draft report shows that, using just one train, there is a way of providing an hourly service with a good cost benefit ratio. One last option is being assessed, which will be reported to the next joint committee

### **RECOMMENDATION**

17. It is RECOMMENDED that Members of the Committee note the contents of the report.

### **Background Papers**

Network Rail Electrification Strategy - Draft for Consultation, May 2009

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