

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

Date **18 DECEMBER 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 large range of schemes and studies reported to the last Joint Committee meeting, including:

Robin Hood Line

Raising speeds on the southern section of the line

3. Works undertaken this autumn and now completed have raised speeds at the southern end of the Robin Hood Line (RHL); between
 - Sutton Forest and Mansfield from 40mph to 60mph, and
 - from just north of Mansfield Woodhouse to Littlewood from 20mph to 50mph
4. The higher speeds will reduce Nottingham - Mansfield Woodhouse journey times by almost 1 minute, and Nottingham - Worksop journey times by 2 minutes. This isn't much, but its effect will be significant. Trains currently have only 4 minutes to turn round at Worksop and just 3 minutes to turn round at Mansfield Woodhouse. This means that any train that arrives late has no margin of 'spare time' before it has to set off again, and so any train that is late northbound is invariably late on its southbound return. The faster linespeeds will allow trains to arrive a bit earlier and depart a little later, and so will increase turnround times to 5 minutes at Mansfield Woodhouse and 8 minutes at Worksop. This means that any trains arriving late will be able to catch up on their schedule by up to 8 minutes, which will greatly reduce the chances of trains being late.
5. The works have cost £360,000. Whilst the scheme was initiated by the Council, it has been funded in full by Network Rail, precisely because it will be so beneficial to reliability for which Network Rail has targets on which it is monitored by the office of Rail Regulation.

Raising speeds on the northern section of the line

6. Following the success of the scheme on the southern section of the line, the County Council has funded, at £35,000, a study of similar possibilities on the northern section of the line. This study is just being completed.
7. The study shows that it would be possible to raise speeds between:
 - Littlewood and Shirebrook from 40mph to 60mph;
 - Whitwell and Woodend junction from 60 to 70mph; and
 - Woodend to Shireoaks junction from 20mph to 50mphfor an estimated sum of around £400,000.
8. This would reduce journey times by a further 2½ minutes northbound, and 2 minutes southbound. This would cut the Nottingham - Worksop journey by 4 ½ minutes, and increase the turnaround time in Worksop to 12½ minutes. Passengers would therefore get a double benefit of a faster journey and a much more reliable service.
9. The Council is commissioning Network Rail to do the detailed design of the scheme, which will establish the precise cost of the works.

Installing double track on the single track section of the line

10. The Council has also commissioned from Network Rail, at £35,000, a study of the possibility of installing double track on the single track section between Kirkby and Bulwell. Re-instating double track would be the other way of making the service more reliable.
11. The study has estimated the cost as £48.4million pounds, + or - 40%. Network Rail has been informed that there is no prospect whatsoever of such a sum being made available for this work.
12. The linespeed works will achieve around 90% of the improvement in reliability that would be achieved by installing double track. As can be seen, the linespeed works will achieve this 90% of the benefit for around 1% of the cost.

Possibility of re-opening the RHL to Ollerton.

13. In 2000, shortly after the re-opening after the 3rd stage of the Robin Hood Line from Mansfield Woodhouse to Worksop, the Council commissioned a study into the possibility of re-opening to Ollerton. This found that re-instating a service to Ollerton would require capital expenditure of £4million, and an annual operating subsidy of over a million pounds per annum (at 2009 prices). Such a level of ongoing subsidy was simply not available.
14. The 2000 report identified that, with the current speeds and journey times on the line, it would need 2 additional trains to provide one train per hour to Ollerton, by extending the trains that currently turn back at Mansfield Woodhouse, and the costings therefore had to be on that basis. The report did note that if speeds could be increased, and journey times reduced

somewhat, it would enable an hourly service to Ollerton to be provided with just one additional train, which would greatly reduce the subsidy that would be required. Unfortunately the 2000 report did not identify any way that the necessary reduction in journey times could be achieved.

15. The linespeed works described in paras 3 12 above will cut journey times sufficiently to enable a re-instated service to Ollerton to be operated with just one additional train. Thus the linespeed works, as well benefiting the existing RHL service, has also halved the cost of operating a re-instated Ollerton service.
16. Unfortunately, there is no national or local funding available for such a service, even at this reduced cost.
17. However, the Council has identified one further possibility of reducing further the operating costs of a re-instated Ollerton service. This might be achieved by using pairs of single coach trains instead of the permanently coupled two-coach trains. It appears possible that the single coaches could be coupled into pairs as far as Shirebrook, where they could split with one vehicle travelling to Worksop and one to Ollerton.
18. This would have the advantage that it would not need any more rolling stock than is currently required, and so could significantly reduce costs. However, there are a number of potential problems, inc
 - Limited availability of single coach trains,
 - Increased potential for delays, and
 - The need for agreement from the train operators and DfT.
19. In addition to this possibility of further reducing operating costs, Network Rail is introducing a new standard 'modular station' design, with the purpose of significantly reducing the capital cost of new stations. The Council is exploring how much this could reduce the cost of re-instating stations at Warsop and Edwinstow.
20. The Council continues to be committed to finding ways of reducing the costs of re-instating a train service to Ollerton. The results of the further work will be reported to the future joint committee meetings.

Other infrastructure schemes

Trent East Junction

21. On the Nottingham - Derby - Birmingham route there is a section of single track at Trent East Junction which forms the biggest bottleneck on the entire East Midlands rail network. During the next month, Network Rail is renewing the track at Trent and is installing double track. The entire cost of £4.8million is being met by Network Rail, again as part of fulfilling its duties to make rail services more reliable.

22. The double track will make Nottingham - Birmingham trains significantly more reliable. It will also mean that trains can pass through more quickly.

Trent West junction

23. This junction is subject to a very severe speed restriction because it is so sharply curved. Network Rail recently renewed the track at this location. As a result of extremely strong pressure from the Council Network Rail has agreed to do some further works here to enable a slightly higher speed. These works are planned for March 2010.

24. The combined effect of the works at both ends of Trent will be:
- to reduce Nottingham - Birmingham journey times by around 5 or 6 minutes; and
 - to make services significantly more reliable.

The reduction in journey times has been formally requested by Cross Country (the Train operator), and is currently subject to the rail industry timetable negotiations, but it is hoped that it will, take effect from May 2010. This will be confirmed (or otherwise) to the next Joint Committee meeting.

Other schemes

25. Assessment and initial design work is continuing on:
- 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 scheme to transform the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln line, with speeds raised to 90mph;
 - a scheme to raise speeds on the Nottingham - Leeds line and reduce journey times by 25 minutes; and
 - a scheme to raise speeds on a section of the Nottingham - Manchester line and reduce journey times by 2 minutes, as the first stage of a much bigger reduction in journey times

Progress on these schemes will be reported to the next Joint Committee meeting.

Nottingham Station Hub scheme

26. The Government have offered support for a modified financing approach that would release rail industry funding necessary to move the Hub project into the tendering stage. Network Rail have now approved the scheme subject to contribution agreements being in place and the Office of the Rail Regulator will formalise its support once East Midlands Trains have approached them as the project sponsor (expected by 19th December).

27. Network Rail is to appoint two contractors (one for the multi-storey car park and one for the main Station works) and they are now engaged in prequalifying contractors and preparing tender documentation to enable a contractor for the multi-storey car park to be appointed by June 2010. Works to the car park are currently due to start on site in November 2010. Work has

started on Station Street public realm improvements and will start soon on the Milk Dock cycle parking facility which are both due to be completed by the end of the financial year.

Midland Main Line upgrade

28. A Parliamentary reception is being held in the Palace of Westminster on 15th December 2009 to promote 'The compelling case for Why the Midland Main Line must be improved'. The reception will be addressed by Lord Adonis, the Secretary of State for Transport. It is expected to be attended by over 100 representatives of a wide range of bodies along the Midland main Line, including MPs, Councils, the business community and other groups.
29. The reception will address the three elements of the potential improvement:-
 - Short-term: the scope to cheaply raise the speed and cut journey times by around ten minutes;
 - Medium-term: electrification, which could cut journey times by a further small amount (approx 3 minutes), would make the service cheaper, would cut CO₂ emissions, and make it easier to get new trains; and
 - Longer-term: a high-speed line, which could cut the Nottingham - London journey times to around 1 hour and massively increase capacity.

Investment to raise current linespeeds and cut journey times

30. 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.
31. In July 2007 the Department for Transport (DfT) published a White Paper titled Delivering a Sustainable Railway¹, and associated documents, which constituted the statutory High Level Output Specification (HLOS). The DfT HLOS - 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
32. On 31 October 2008, the Office of Rail Regulation (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 MML scheme, and 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

¹ HMSO, Command 7176

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

to reduce journey times by “around 10 minutes”.³ However, a letter from ORR to Network Rail on 3rd September 2009 defined the required output as linespeed improvements that will reduce the Sheffield - London journey time by 8 minutes⁴.

33. On 8 July 2009 Network Rail reported that the sum available was £69 million. This is far, far less than would normally be allowed for any comparable rail or road scheme, and will require extraordinary value for money from Network Rail.
34. Network Rail is now working on the detailed design of the scheme, and how to achieve an 8 minute reduction in the Sheffield - London journey time from just £69million. Network Rail expects to complete this design work and to report back in January 2010. At that stage it will be reported exactly what will be the time saving between Nottingham and London, but it is expected to be around 6 or 7 minutes.
35. In addition, it appears that there is a further element of work that could be done at Market Harborough that could save a further 2 minutes. Work is in hand with Network Rail to establish a cost for this additional element of work, and to see if there is any possibility of it being funded somehow.
36. The outcome of the scheme should mean that, if Nottingham trains called only at Leicester, the Nottingham - London journey time could be cut from the current 1¾ hours to 90 minutes as from 2014 as long as the additional element of work at Market Harborough, or 92 minutes if the Market Harborough work is not done.

Electrification

37. On 26th October 2009, Network Rail adopted and published its Electrification Strategy. This confirmed that *“two options in particular – the Great Western (GWML) and Midland Main Lines (MML) – are shown to have high benefit to cost ratios. These options, along with key strategic infill schemes, are both presented as the proposed core strategy⁵. Indeed they potentially involve a net industry cost saving rather than net cost (as) the requirement for upfront investment by Network Rail will be offset by lifetime cost savings, largely in the costs of train operation⁶.”*
38. 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.
39. 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,

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

⁴ Letter from ORR to Network rail giving approval the ‘CP4 enhancements delivery plan, 3rd September 2009

⁵ Network Rail Electrification Strategy, Oct 09, page 3

⁶ Network Rail Electrification Strategy, Oct 09, page 6

and Liverpool and Preston, as shown in Figure 9. The Department will continue to work with stakeholders to review these schemes⁷.

40. Electrification would cut journey times by around a further 3 minutes, on top of the 12 minute reduction produced by the linespeed scheme.
41. There has been much speculation, but no firm indication from DfT as to when it might make any further announcement re MML electrification.
- 42.

High Speed Rail (HSR)

43. The City and County Councils are supportive of a High Speed Rail (HSR) network and have been involved with the lobby to secure a HSR programme as a cross party manifesto pledge. We believe that the East Midlands should be served by a line and that Nottingham City Centre should act as the regional stop in preference to an out-of-town Parkway type Station.
44. The case for HSR serving the East Midlands is supported through:
 - high growth rates in population, employment and housing;
 - high levels of congestion in the M1 corridor and other trunk road routes;
 - St Pancras is the existing national rail gateway into Europe via High Speed 1 (HS1) and the Channel Tunnel;
 - a high dependence on airports outside of the region which have poor existing rail connections from the region;
 - the relative uncompetitiveness of the MML in terms of journey times;
 - the amount already spent upgrading the West Coast Main Line;
 - London is a key market and links are identified by the business community as a priority;
 - the importance of improving access to the growing economies of northern cities;
 - released capacity would relieve overcrowding on the southern section of the MML and provide additional paths for freight.
45. We recognise that the initial phase will be for a HS2 to Birmingham. It is essential that connectivity between Nottingham and this line is considered as part of the proposals. Work should also continue beyond the HS2 proposals. This will be best achieved through the safeguarding of a new high speed line to directly link London, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Newcastle and preferably onto Edinburgh.
46. Historically Nottingham's competitiveness has been undermined by the rail network. However, despite this Nottingham is a Core City and the Regional Capital, successfully developing a service sector economy and has achieved Science City status. HSR is an opportunity to correct the previous mistakes made to the rail network serving Nottingham.

⁷ Paragraph 80, page 27

47. The High Speed Two company are due to report their findings to the Government by the end of 2009. The Government is expected to publish a High Speed Rail White Paper in the New Year.

Service changes from December 2009

48. Rail timetables change twice per year in May and December. As usual, most services remain the same, but the following improvements to local services took effect as from 13th December 2009:

Aslockton

49. Following a strong local campaign, the number of trains is increased from 13 to 21 per weekday. The additional trains will give a better choice of trains into Nottingham, and will also permit commuting to/from Grantham.
50. The enhanced service at Aslockton is initially until December 2011. East Midlands Trains (EMT) has undertaken to make the enhanced service permanent as long as an additional 3000 passengers per annum use Aslockton station. To ensure this is achieved, the County Council, in conjunction with Aslockton and Whatton parish Councils, will be promoting the new service during 2010.

Bulwell

51. Sunday services on the RHL have so far not called at Bulwell. From 13th December 2009 half of the Sunday service - ten trains per Sunday - will call at Bulwell.
52. The City Council is pressing for all Sunday trains to call at Bulwell from the earliest possible date, on completion of signalling works in the Bulwell area.

Service changes from May 2010

53. The next timetable change will be in May 2010. The following changes are being requested:
- an additional train every hour from Beeston to Loughborough and Leicester;
 - all Sunday trains to call at Bulwell;
 - an additional train at 07.00 from Newark, Fiskerton, Lowdham and Carlton to Nottingham;
 - an additional train at 19.30 from Nottingham to Carlton, Lowdham, and Fiskerton to Newark and Lincoln;
 - a small reduction - 4 or 5 minutes - in Sunday journey times to/from London;
 - the 09.31 Lincoln to Nottingham to call at Collingham.

Nottingham - Newark

54. 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.
55. 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 May 2010 timetable.

56. 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.
57. 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.

East Coast Main Line

58. As from 13th November 2009, National Express plc relinquished its franchise to operate the East Coast Main Line (ECML), as it was unable to make its contracted franchise payments. The service is now being operated by Directly Operated Railways, which comes under the aegis of the DfT. There is no immediate change to the service, and the current timetable will continue to operate.
59. There are longstanding plans to change the ECML timetable from December 2010.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Background Papers

61. Britain's Transport Infrastructure - Rail Electrification, DfT, July 2009
Network Route Utilisation Strategy. Network Rail, October 2009

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