

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

Date **24 JUNE 2011** Agenda item number

From **JOINT OFFICER STEERING GROUP**

## **RAIL ISSUES UPDATE**

### **Purpose of the report**

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

### Midland Main Line

2. On 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010, in response to a joint letter from Councillors Jackson and Urquhart, the Councils received a reply from the Minister of State for Transport, Theresa Villiers MP, which stated  
*"The recently announced Regional Growth Fund is a potential source of funding. Given the benefits you and your fellow local authorities have identifies as linked to further investment in the Midland Main Line, I suggest you look initially to this fund for the £27million that you seek".*  
Whilst not being a commitment, this is the most positive on-the-record statement that has been made about this scheme by a Government Minister, and is extremely encouraging.
3. As a result of Ms Villiers' letter, intensive work has been underway between Nottinghamshire County Council, East Midlands Councils, Network Rail, East Midlands Trains, and Nottingham Regeneration Ltd, to draw up a bid to round 2 of the Regional Growth Fund (RGF). Emda has now withdrawn from this work as it is being abolished soon. The bid has received strong endorsement from the new Local Economic Partnership.
4. If it is approved, the additional works to complement the £69m scheme should mean that the Nottingham - London journey time could be cut from the current 1¾ hours to 90 minutes as from 2014.
5. A stakeholder group has been established to oversee the RGF bid comprising both Councils, Network Rail, East Midlands Trains, East Midlands Councils and Nottingham Regeneration Ltd. The County Council has commissioned Network Rail to refine what works are required, the costings, and the precise benefits. This work is due for completion by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011.
6. Officers attended a BIS (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills) workshop on 6<sup>th</sup> June about RGF. The RGF criteria make it very difficult for any transport scheme to prove its case. Nonetheless the Councils have the

November 2010 letter from the Minister of State for Transport, Theresa Villiers, in which she tells the Councils to look to the RGF fund for this scheme, plus the support of the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, so it is intended to submit the scheme for round 2 of RGF (closing date 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011).

7. A draft has been prepared of a letter from Councillors Jackson and Urquhart to the Minister (Ms Villiers) to be sent at the start of July to say that we have followed her advice and submitted an RGF bid for this scheme.

### High Speed Rail

8. In February 2010, the Department for Transport (DfT) published a consultation document setting out its proposed strategy for a high-speed rail network for Britain. It has two main elements
  - A detailed proposed route between London and Birmingham, and
  - An in principle commitment to a network that includes two 'arms' north from Birmingham,
    - one to Manchester and the north west, and
    - one to the East Midlands, Sheffield, and Leeds, with connections onwards to Newcastle and Edinburgh,plus short sections connecting directly to Heathrow and to the Channel tunnel line to Paris, Belgium, Germany and beyond.
9. Appendix A, to be distributed at the meeting, gives a draft submission to this consultation, strongly supporting the Government's overall strategy, and in particular the inclusion of the eastern 'arm' of the network through the East Midlands and an East Midlands station. The consultation closes on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

### Nottingham Station Hub scheme

10. Network Rail's appointed contractor for the multi-story car park contract, Vinci Plc, are making good progress on site and remain on course to complete by May 2012. Network Rail has received four completed forms of tender for the main station works and it is anticipated that this contract will awarded in September 2011 with all work, including associated highways work, programmed to be complete by November 2014.

### Nottingham - Birmingham journey time improvement

11. On 26<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Network Rail published its 'West Midlands and Chilterns Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). The RUS notes that Nottingham - Birmingham has 289,000 passengers per annum<sup>1</sup>, making it the fifth biggest flow from Birmingham to a place outside the West Midlands - after London, Leicester, Derby and Manchester, but greater than Bristol, Leeds, Sheffield or Liverpool.
12. Following strong representations by the Councils, and a series of meetings with Network Rail, the RUS formally recognises as a 'Gap' (between the service currently provide and what service ought to be provided) the

“Inadequate journey time between Birmingham New St and Nottingham”<sup>ii</sup>. The RUS consider in detail what could be done to address this ‘Gap’ and concludes that “It is recommended that once the Nottingham resignalling scheme has been implemented in 2013, opportunities are sought to reduce journey times for Nottingham to Birmingham New St services through timetabling improvements in the East Midlands. The potential for further benefits should subsequently be explored following Derby resignalling in Control Period 5”<sup>iii</sup> (2014 - 2019).

13. It was reported to this committee in December 2009 that Trent West junction is subject to a very severe speed restriction (10mph westbound and 15mph eastbound) because it is so sharply curved. Network Rail renewed the track at this location in August 2009, and as a result of extremely strong pressure from the Council Network Rail agreed to do some further works here to raise speeds slightly (to 15mph westbound and 20mph eastbound). These works are finally planned for the weekend of 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> June 2011.
14. Train operator Cross Country had hoped that these works, together with previous works at Trent East Junction, would enable some modest reduction in the Nottingham - Birmingham journey times, but that has not proved possible in advance of the Nottingham resignalling. However, completion of these works at Trent West does mean that this element of the journey time reduction will be achievable once the Nottingham resignalling scheme has been completed in 2013.

#### Infrastructure improvements

15. In conjunction with Network Rail, work continues on the large range of schemes and studies reported previously, including:
  - a study into raising the speed on the Nottingham to Grantham line, so as to reduce journey times and enable a substantial increase in service to Aslockton, Radcliffe and Netherfield,
  - a scheme to transform the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln line, with speeds raised to 90mph (see also paragraphs 16 - 18 below),
  - a scheme to raise speeds on the Nottingham - Leeds line and reduce journey times by 25 minutes,
  - 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,
  - a study of raising speeds on the northern section of the Robin Hood Line, and
  - a study of whether it might be possible to reduce the costs of re-opening the Robin Hood Line to Ollerton.Details will be reported to future joint committee meetings as work progresses.

#### Robin Hood Line Sunday service

16. A contract is being signed with the Department of Transport for the revised Sunday service of 8 return trips between Nottingham and Mansfield Woodhouse. This revised Sunday service commenced on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2011 and will continue until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

### Other service changes to local trains

17. The next timetable change will be as from 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011. There will be a couple of minor change to services to/from Nottingham
  - The 06.45 Nottingham - Grantham - Skegness will depart 4 minutes earlier and call at Bingham. This is in response to a request from a member of the public made to Councillor Butler, to which East Midlands Trains has agreed; and
  - The 07 08 Lincoln - Newark - Nottingham - Leicester - London will depart 4 minutes earlier and call at Lowdham. This is the fulfilment of an undertaking made in 2008 by East Midlands Trains, to users from Lowdham that this train would call there as soon as it was possible to get a slightly earlier path for this train across the Newark flat crossing of the East Coast Main Line.
18. East Midlands Trains has requested that, as a consequence of changes to the East Coast Main Line timetable, DfT fund a small package of enhanced services between Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln, including an additional train at 19.30 from Nottingham to Newark and Lincoln, calling at intermediate stations.
19. East Midlands Trains had also requested that, as a consequence of changes to the East Coast Main Line timetable, DfT fund an additional train at 06.30 from Lincoln to Newark and Nottingham, calling at intermediate stations, but DfT declined to do so from its 'rail' budget. Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire Councils have therefore submitted a bid for £90,800 from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to run this train on weekdays. An announcement is expected at the end of June as to which LSTF bids have been successful.
20. In support of these requests, and a number of other minor improvements between Newark and Lincoln, a joint letter is being written to the Minister of State for Transport, Theresa Villiers, from Nottinghamshire (Councillor Jackson), Nottingham City (Councillor Urquhart), Lincolnshire, Lincoln City, and Newark & Sherwood Councils.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

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

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<sup>i</sup> W Mids RUS page 40

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