

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

Date **16 DECEMBER 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 31st October 2011 the Government announced the results of round 2 of the Regional Growth Fund (RGF). The bid by East Midlands Trains for £20.6 million to invest in the Midland Main Line was unsuccessful.
3. The bid to RGF had been submitted following correspondence between the Councils and Ministers, and in particular letters on 24th November 2010 from Theresa Villiers to Councillor Jackson and Councillor Urquhart in which she said "The recently announced Regional Growth Fund is a potential source of funding....I suggest you look initially to this fund for the £27million you seek".
4. Despite the helpful intention of the suggestion from the Minister, as the Regional Growth Fund evolved it transpired that in fact it was not really intended for transport schemes, very few of which were allocated any RGF funding.
5. In the March 2011 budget, the Government made available £200million of additional funding for railway infrastructure. Of this £127m has been allocated to 2 schemes in Manchester and between Swindon to Kemble, leaving £73million so far unallocated. No decision has yet been announced regarding this remaining £73million.
6. On 14th October 2011, shortly prior to the RGF announcement, Councillors Jackson and Urquhart again wrote jointly to the Minister, pressing the case for the scheme for which RGF was being sought. At the date of drafting this report (28/11/11) no reply had been received.
7. A further letter has been drafted to go from Councillors Jackson and Urquhart to the Minister regretting the failure of the RGF bid and asking that the scheme be funded from the unallocated £73m budget monies.

8. The recently published Initial Industry Plan (IIP) contains a number of proposals for the Midland main Line - see separate report.
9. The assessment and development work that Nottinghamshire CC commissioned regarding Market Harborough and the MML is being subsumed into the IIP.
10. On 29th November a meeting was organised by East Midlands Councils and South Yorkshire PTE in Parliament to raise the profile of the Midland Main Line (MML) and to lobby for its upgrading and electrification. Councillor Urquhart and Councillor Adair represented Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. The event was well attended by Stakeholders from along the MML, but only 4 MPs attended. Unfortunately Ministers were engaged elsewhere in conjunction with the announcements that day in the Chancellor's pre-budget report and the publication of the National Infrastructure Plan.
11. The Chancellor's pre-budget report and the National Infrastructure Plan contained commitments for investment in a number of rail schemes, but unfortunately there was no mention of the MML in either.

High Speed Rail

12. In February 2011, 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.

The consultation closed on 29th July 2011. Both Councils have made submissions, which are attached at Appendix A.
13. It is expected that the Minister will make an announcement of his decision around the end of the year.

Nottingham Station Hub scheme

14. Network Rail's appointed contractor for the multi-story car park contract, Vinci Plc, remains on course to complete works by May 2012 and in October 2011 Network Rail also entered into contract with Vinci Plc to deliver the main station works. All work, including associated highways work, is programmed to be complete by November 2014 though opportunities to reduce the length of the construction programme are still being explored which could potentially bring completion forward to early 2014

Nottingham - Birmingham journey time improvement

15. 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 were finally undertaken over the weekend of 18th & 19th June 2011. The speed limit signs were due to be altered in November - I am seeking confirmation that this has been done, and will amend the report before the Joint Cttee meeting.
16. 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 an element of journey time reduction should be achievable once the Nottingham resignalling scheme has been completed in 2013.

Infrastructure improvements

17. 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,
 - 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.

Other service changes to local trains

18. The winter timetable started on 11th December 2011. As reported to last joint committee meeting, there were a couple of minor change to services to/from Nottingham
 - The 06.45 Nottingham - Grantham - Skegness departs 4 minutes earlier and calls 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;
 - The 07 08 Lincoln - Newark - Nottingham - Leicester - London will departs 4 minutes earlier and calls 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;

- a additional train runs at 19.30 from Nottingham to Newark and Lincoln, calling at Carlton, Burton Joyce, Lowdham, and Fiskerton; and
- an additional trains runs at 16.34 from Nottingham to Grantham and Norwich.

19. Also from the winter timetable all Nottingham - Liverpool trains (via Sheffield & Manchester) will be formed of 4 vehicles. This rectifies an error made at the time of letting the franchise in 2007 when DfT told bidders that the amount of rolling stock then being used for the Nottingham - Liverpool service was less than it actually was, which resulted in Nottingham - Liverpool trains being reduced in length and becoming the most persistently overcrowded service in Britain.

Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln

20. The Councils continue to be involved in the Nottingham - Lincoln line Stakeholder board which has been established by East Midlands Trains (EMT). The Stakeholder board had been working hard to try to get 2 additional vehicles to enable a doubling of the service frequency between Nottingham and Newark, from the current 1 train per hour to a train every 30 minutes.
21. Some new diesel trains are being built for services in the West Midlands. They will be the last diesel trains built for Britain's railway system for a very long time. Some will be used to lengthen trains, but about half of the new trains will displace some 40 older vehicles for use elsewhere. On 10th August, DfT announced that 32 of these vehicles were being allocated to *"deliver additional seats into Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield and Newcastle from December 2011. The total cost of this investment is £16.7m. This covers the net cost of additional passenger services until the end of each franchise."* As can be seen, this DfT investment benefits every 'Core City' in England except Nottingham. Only Nottingham is left out.
22. On DfT announced that the remaining 8 vehicles were being allocated to First Greater Western for use on 2 branch lines in Devon and Cornwall, and in the Thames valley. First great Western was also allowed to re-hire some HST vehicles that it had previously withdrawn. The denial of these vehicles to the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln route has generated an angry response from some local stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATION

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

Contact Officers

Jim Bamford, Communities Department, Nottinghamshire County Council
Tel: 0115 9773172
E-mail: jim.bamford@nottscc.gov.uk
Chris Carter, Development Department, Nottingham City Council
Tel: 0115 8763963
E-mail: chris.carter@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
