

West Anglia Routes Group

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Draft determination of Network Rail's outputs and funding for 2014 to 2019 – Response from the West Anglia Routes Group

I am again writing to you on behalf of the West Anglia Routes Group (WARG). As I previously mentioned the Group is an association of public and private sector organisations from along the routes running from Liverpool Street and Stratford through north London into Essex, Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. These organisations are working together, with cross party political support, to promote economic growth through securing timely rail investment to enhance capacity and improve reliability. With this in mind the Group welcomes the opportunity to respond to the draft determination of Network Rail's outputs and funding for 2014 to 2019.

The West Anglia Routes serve the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor which is one of the most economically important in the UK with a rich mix of businesses, significant growth locations, including at Cambridge, Harlow and the Upper Lee Valley, as well as leisure opportunities including the Lee Valley Regional Park which provides a green spine. However due to infrastructure constraints the rail lines serving this area have low service frequencies, relatively long journey times and high levels of crowding.

It is important that the determination recognises the pressure on the network as passenger numbers grow. This is particularly acute in London and the South-East where Office of Rail Regulation figures show that there were 262.0 million journeys on London and South East services in Q3 2012/13, a 5.1% increase on the same period in 2011/12¹. In contrast on regional services there were 90.4 million journeys, a 1.1% increase.

This trend is set to continue with recent figures showing that London's population is growing at a faster rate than originally forecast and at a pace much faster than the rest of the UK. It is estimated that by 2030 the population of London alone will have grown by another 1.7 million people to 10 million. Therefore it is welcome that the determination confirms funding for large scale capacity enhancements via the completion of Crossrail and the Thameslink programme.

For the West Anglia Routes it is particularly welcome that the wider enhancement programme includes up to £44m in funding for West Anglia main line capacity increases and £32m for service improvements in the Ely Area. It is imperative that both of these schemes receive at least this level of funding because they both address existing gaps in the network and allow increases in capacity.

¹ <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.11128>

However there are some concerns that the proposed approach to defining enhancement schemes in the determination could lead to delays in delivering improvements. This is particularly important for the West Anglia mainline capacity increases (SE022) where additional funding from London Enterprise Panel and Transport for London (£25m and £3m of respectively) for complementary improvements, which will allow four trains per hour from the Upper Lee Valley to Stratford, is contingent on Network Rail funding being made available in 2014. *For this reason the Group would like confirmation that enhancement schemes, as set out in the determination, that reach GRIP 3 and above in 2014 can be approved for funding by Network Rail.*

A regular four trains per hour train service from the Upper Lee Valley (Angel Road and Northumberland Park stations), via the strategic transport hub at Tottenham Hale and a re-opened Lea Bridge station, to Stratford will deliver a scheme which supports the delivery of over 15,000 homes, 15,700 jobs and by 2031 cumulative additional GVA of £10.7 billion within the core opportunity area. More specifically this investment will be key to:

- The Meridian Water development which is currently forecast to provide 5,000 homes and up to 4,500 jobs;
- Supporting the development of High Road West in Tottenham which includes the re-development of the Tottenham Hotspur football stadium and should see 1,800 new homes as well as 1,500 jobs;
- Delivering 3,500 homes and 500 jobs at Northumberland Park;
- Strengthening the case for developing a number of sites around Tottenham Hale with the potential to create 4,700 residential units and 4,900 permanent jobs;
- Securing 1,600 homes and 1,000 jobs in the Lea Bridge area.

The delivery of the whole scheme makes use of existing railway assets and is in line with Government policy relating to maximising the use of existing infrastructure. It should also result in safety and reliability improvements, particularly if Northumberland Park level crossing is closed to vehicular traffic and a new pedestrian / cycle bridge put in place.

Linked to this is the confirmation of ring-fenced funds which could also be of significance for the West Anglia Routes:

- Level Crossings - an ongoing issue on the West Anglia Routes is the number of level crossings so it is positive that funding is committed to 'Level Crossing Risk Reduction' and, given their locations on a high frequency mainline, the Group would welcome some of this funding being used to look into addressing the safety issues at various locations.
- Station Improvements – stations are the gateway to the network so it is positive that, outside of various committed schemes for large scale improvements, funding has been included for improving station infrastructure (for example better passenger information) and delivering Access for All schemes. Obviously there will be a great deal of interest in these funds and the Group looks forward to working with the rail industry to identify priority schemes.
- Reducing Journey Times - reduced journey times on longer distance services from Cambridge, Hertford and Stansted will further stimulate growth and the early development of infrastructure options with the related business case is encouraged. At Stansted Airport more passengers would use existing latent capacity - the airport currently has around 17.5m passengers per annum but can accommodate 35m.

Confirmation of funding for developing schemes for delivery in Control Period 6 is also important. The Group will be making a strong case for developing an infrastructure scheme which removes existing constraints along the Lea Valley mainline to allow more frequent services, reduce journey times and improve reliability.

The investment in additional rail infrastructure from the Lea Valley main line to Stratford is a step towards this. However it is only the first part of a series of incremental improvements needed to address the ongoing constraints arising from having a twin track main line.

Previous work (Network Rail's London and South East RUS) has shown that delivering additional tracks along the Lea Valley main line from south of Broxbourne has a positive Benefit Cost Ratio even without a second runway at Stansted Airport. This is because of the high levels of growth projected along the corridor which is anchored in the south by the City of London and Stratford, runs through the Upper Lee Valley (as outlined above) and the Broxbourne Lee Valley Enterprise Corridor, which has the scope to deliver up to 6,300 jobs and 4,200 houses, and goes on to the Harlow Enterprise Zone and the international science and technology hub at Cambridge.

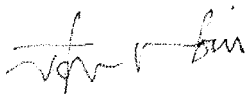
The Group do not think it makes economic sense to further delay development of a solution which will allow the rail industry to more quickly respond to the high levels of growth already forecast on this key rail corridor. To wait condemns passengers to again suffer from years of crowded conditions, infrequent services and delays.

In addition current work by Transport for London on the development of a cross London rail line from the south-west to the north east – Crossrail 2 – has shown that an option which runs north along a four track Lea Valley main line out to Hertfordshire is feasible and has positive value for money. However delivery of this option assumes that (due to its positive business case) four tracking of the Lea Valley mainline will already have taken place by 2025.

Finally the Group also support schemes for traction power supply upgrades and improvements at Bow Junction which are also important as they allow improvements to services across the wider Anglia region.

Obviously if you require any further information about the Group or this response please get in touch.

Regards



John McGill

Chair, West Anglia Routes Group

Cc: West Anglia Routes Group Membership