

Strategic Transport Forum

14th October 2016

Agenda Item 6: West Midlands and Chiltern Route Study – Consultation Response

It is recommended that the Strategic Transport Forum's response to the consultation by Network Rail:

- a) Support the assessment which demonstrates the need to plan for growth on the rail network across the study area
- b) Support the proposal to improve connectivity from the Chiltern Route to Old Oak Common, in particular seeking to improve the connectivity along the Northampton – Milton Keynes – Bletchley – Aylesbury – Wycombe – Old Oak Common axis to complement improved East-West connectivity
- c) Support the proposal to provide longer trains into London Maylebone on the Chiltern route
- d) Support the proposal to maximise the opportunities to interchange on to HS2 services at Old Oak Common
- e) Emphasise the importance of Network Rail working with England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance in the development to the Route Study and its subsequent implementation
- f) Stress the need for the development of the franchise specification for East-West rail services to be undertaken in collaboration with England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance
- g) Emphasise the need to use the arrival of HS2 to review the allocation of residual train paths on the West Coast Main Line as the opportunity to improve North-South connectivity to complement improved East-West connectivity.

1. Context

- 1.1. Within the rail sector the purpose of Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process (LTPP) is to inform funders as to how the railway could support the UK economy over the next 30 years. In particular the purpose of the LTPP is to propose ways in which train services and infrastructure enhancement could develop over the longer term period to 2043, as well as looking to provide an evidence base for investment to 2024 and in the medium term including the delivery of HS2 Phase 1 in 2026.
- 1.2. The West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study is one of a number of studies that forms part of the LTPP. It was developed through a joint working group made up of stakeholders from across the rail industry. The documentation and analysis supporting the study was produced by Network Rail on behalf of the working group.

- 1.3. The Strategic Transport Forum is invited to consider the issues raised by the consultation document and to agree a response on behalf of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance.

2. Consultation Document: Strategic Options

- 2.1. The consultation document sets out the importance of the railway to the region, the markets and the communities it serves. Rail's share of travel into Birmingham at peak times is recorded as having increased from 17% in 2001 to 38% in 2016. Longer term forecasts show commuting into Birmingham will grow by 49% over the period 2013-2023, and by 114% by 2043.
- 2.2. Commuting into London Marylebone is identified as being a success story. Between 2011 and 2015 the number of passengers travelling in and out of Marylebone during peak times increased by 20%. Looking forward these figures are forecast to grow by 22% to 2023 and 76% by 2043.
- 2.3. Freight use is expected to transfer away from traditional heavy bulk traffic towards container traffic which is forecast to grow strongly.
- 2.4. The consultation document sets out the strategic options that have been identified in order to meet the challenge arising from continued growth in passenger and freight demand. The strategic options are presented in three clear categories:

Meeting demand to 2024

- Providing longer trains across the West Midlands network and into London Marylebone on the Chiltern route
- Upgrading passenger facilities at stations to safely manage increasing passenger numbers

Maximising the opportunities offered by the arrival of High Speed Two (HS2)

- Providing additional capacity in central Birmingham to support up to 10 additional train services
- Providing additional capacity between Birmingham and the East Midlands to support additional passenger and freight services
- Providing links into Old Oak Common from the Chiltern network for connections to HS2 and Crossrail
- Maximising the opportunities to interchange on to HS2 services

Developing a longer term view towards 2043

- Upgrading the Chiltern Route, including new rolling stock, electrification and advanced signalling.
- Enhancing the infrastructure at key locations to separate the flows of passenger and freight services, depending on how future traffic flows develop
- Full roll out of advanced signalling across the study area.

- 2.5. Responses to the consultation document will feed into the final Route Study, which Network Rail intends to publish later this autumn.

3. England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance: Response

- 3.1. The West Midlands and Chiltern Route Study is an important consultation for the Strategic Alliance. The delivery of East-West Rail in the short term will have a significant beneficial impact on connectivity across the Heartland.
- 3.2. In looking ahead it is especially important to bear in mind that the benefit is not just limited to East-West connectivity but also North-South connectivity. The arrival of HS2 affords the opportunity to review the allocation of train paths on the West Coast Main Line, and when considered alongside the delivery of East-West Rail, this offers the opportunity to improve the connectivity along the Northampton – Milton Keynes – Bletchley – Aylesbury – Wycombe – Old Oak Common axis.
- 3.3. Improvements in the connectivity along this North-South axis offers the opportunity for the rail network to support the Strategic Alliance in its ambition to realise the economic potential of the Heartland area. The North-South corridor links areas of planned growth in emerging Local Plans as well as offering opportunities for longer-term growth that may come forward in the period to 2043.
- 3.4. The linkage with Old Oak Common – which would provide access to/from the regeneration opportunities being taken forward by the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation, as well as affording access to interchange opportunities with HS2, Crossrail, Heathrow and Great Western rail services – is of strategic significance for the Heartland area.
- 3.5. As the Strategic Alliance looks to develop its proposal to establish a statutory Sub-national Transport Body it is important that the Alliance is more closely involved in the Long Term Planning Process, complementing the input of Midlands Connect. In particular, through the East-West Rail Consortium, a number of Strategic Alliance partners are already working closely with DfT and Network Rail to deliver East-West Rail – work that involves substantial 'work in kind' as well as a local contribution of £46m towards the cost of the Western Section. The Strategic Alliance has also set out to DfT its desire to be closely involved in the development of the franchise specification for East-West Rail in order to ensure that the improved connectivity offered by the restoration of rail services is designed to complement planned growth.
- 3.6. The response outlined above is consistent with the Strategic Alliance's submission to the National Infrastructure Commission. In particular it is consistent with the Alliance's agreed approach to strategic transport infrastructure which is based on, inter alia:
- Delivery of East-West Rail (both Western and Central Sections)
 - Investment in key transport hubs to allow the rail system to operate as a full network by facilitating interchange where lines meet and to ensure sufficient capacity for increased levels of demand and encourage modal shift

- 3.7. The response is also consistent with the Alliance's Planning for Growth position statement which highlights both East-West and North- South connectivity as being of strategic importance.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. The Strategic Transport Forum is invited to focus its response to the consultation on the strategic issues set out in this paper. The Programme Team will then follow up with Network Rail on behalf of the Forum.

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