
Meeting: Rail North Committee
Subject: East Coast Mainline Services and Infrastructure
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Sponsor: David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director
Meeting Date: Tuesday 13 September 2022

1. Purpose of the Report:

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an update on the revised East Coast Mainline (ECML) timetable proposal and progress with the development of infrastructure to facilitate further service enhancements.
- 1.2 To provide the Committee with an update on the Leeds Area Study.

2. Recommendations:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the update on industry work to introduce a revised timetable on the East Coast Main Line and further infrastructure enhancements.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the update on the Leeds Area Study.

3. Main Issues:

- 3.1 The East Coast Main Line links the North East to almost all other parts of the UK and is West and North Yorkshire's primary link to London but suffers from constraints and unreliability that places a limit on the number of passenger and freight trains that can serve the region and constraining future growth. Transport for the North, Local Authorities and businesses in the North East have been seeking an increase in the capacity of the northern end of the East Coast main line for some time.
- 3.2 Various studies have identified infrastructure options to increase capacity. Some, including works to allow larger freight containers to use the Northallerton–Eaglescliffe route to access Teesport rather than reverse at Darlington, are progressing towards delivery.

Timetable Development

- 3.3 In 2021 a revised timetable, planned to be introduced in May 2022, was consulted upon. It would have provided a third London North Eastern Railway (LNER) service per hour between London and Newcastle but at the expense of an existing northeast – northwest service which reduced connectivity across the north and additionally had other impacts on local services and reduced calling patterns at some stations in the North.
- 3.4 Transport for the North, with input from its partner authorities, made a robust response to the 2021 timetable consultation and which contributed to the decision by the industry to develop alternative proposals.
- 3.5 In June 2022, the Department for Transport (DfT) issued to Transport for the North and key partners a further draft East Coast Main Line timetable for review.
- 3.6 Transport for the North's consultants have undertaken a comparison between the previous timetable (issued in summer 2021) and the one issued for consultation in June 2022. This technical work has concluded that whilst the most recent draft

timetable provides additional connectivity benefits in some parts of the region, it however does not fully deliver the requirements of all partners and stakeholders.

- 3.7 A Ministerial decision regarding whether the proposed timetable will go ahead in May 2023 was still awaited at the time of writing, however it is understood by Transport for the North that introducing a full suite of changes would have some risks should the decision be taken now. However, it would be possible to make some marginal changes (e.g Cross Country improvements which will benefit passengers).
- 3.8 In discussion with DfT, Transport for the North believes that infrastructure changes required on the ECML north of York are now included within the Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) Delivery Programme being delivered by the DfT and there is a commitment to deliver the 7th/8th path per hour on the ECML.
- 3.9 The ECML between York and Newcastle is part of the Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) network and it is important that it is planned so that the Integrated Rail Plan NPR outputs can be achieved, and these are overseen by the NPR Sponsor Board to ensure consistency with the wider NPR Programme.
- 3.10 Shorter term infrastructure development is focussed on adding the 7th/8th path per hour. This could allow reinstatement of the 2tph east -west TransPennine Express services.
- 3.11 Transport for the North, supported by Transport North East, participated in an industry workshop led by Network Rail, and attended by representatives of DfT, Train and Freight Operating companies to baseline the requirements for the East Coast Main Line North. At this workshop Transport for the North presented their development of a Blueprint for the East Coast Main Line North, linking service enhancements to infrastructure and specifically indicating the enhancements required to deliver the capacity and service improvements required by Transport for the North and local authority partners. A strong case was presented to use the capacity provided by the 7th path to improve east- west connectivity which could allow the reinstatement of the TransPennine Express services, although there may be competing priorities. Further work is required to build a strong evidence-base for this case, based on Transport for the North's broad data and analytics capability. Network Rail have concluded the Strategic Outline Business Case, and this is with DfT for review. The next stage, an Outline Business Case, is planned to be taken forward as part of the IRP development work and is seen as an early IRP output.
- 3.12 Transport for the North continues to support cross-industry work alongside West Yorkshire Combined Authority and City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council to increase the number of LNER services by up to 6 per day between Bradford, Leeds, and London. The plan remains for these services to be delivered in time for Bradford hosting UK City of Culture in 2025.

Leeds Area Study

- 3.13 The Government's Integrated Rail Plan was published in November 2021 and commits to look at the most effective way to run HS2 trains to Leeds including the most optimal solution for Leeds Station capacity and starting work on the West Yorkshire Mass Transit System. To support this activity, studies will be carried out over an 18 to 24-month period, guided by Terms of Reference set by the DfT.

3.14 To support the study, West Yorkshire Combined Authority has established a Leeds Area Studies Board. The Board will steer and provide oversight for the studies covering extension of high-speed services to Leeds, Leeds station network capacity and better Bradford connections, as set out in the IRP. The Board is chaired by Network Rail and includes partners from West and South Yorkshire, Government departments, East Midlands Councils and Midlands Connect. Transport for the North plays a key role in this Board, recognising the importance of Leeds station to services across the north and further afield.

3.15 The Terms of Reference for the HS2 to Leeds Study have not yet been published by the DfT and this is now unlikely to happen until a new Prime Minister and potentially new Ministers are in place. Transport for the North has supported calls for this Terms of Reference to be published as soon as possible.

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 *Financial Implications*

There are no financial implications for Transport for the North as a result of this report.

4.2 *Resource Implications*

There are no direct resourcing implications as a result of this report.

4.3 *Legal Implications*

Consideration will need to be given as to any potential consequential changes to the governance provisions in Transport for the North's Constitution to reflect the formation of the Leeds Area Studies Board, and the potential ECML Integrated Programme Board and the co-sponsorship arrangements as outlined in the report. There are no further apparent legal implications arising other than raised within the report.

4.4 *Risk Management and Key Issues*

This paper does not require a risk assessment, however, risks relating to the delivery of infrastructure will be identified, assessed, managed, and monitored by Network Rail. A risk is included on the Transport for the North Corporate Risk Register in relation to future timetable changes.

4.5 *Environmental Implications*

This report does not constitute or influence a plan or programme which sets the framework for future development consents of projects listed in the EIA Directive and therefore does stimulate the need for SEA or EIA. Any infrastructure proposals to improve the capacity and reliability of the system will be subject to EIA Screening, conducted by Network Rail as part of the consenting process for those projects.

4.6 *Equality and Diversity*

A full impact assessment has not been carried out because it is not relevant to the type of work referenced.

4.7 *Consultations*

Consultations will be carried out by the appropriate body in development of the infrastructure works and on timetable changes through industry processes.

5. Background Papers

5.1 There are no background papers to this report.

6. Appendices

6.1 There are no appendices to this report.

Glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used (*if applicable*)

Please include any technical abbreviations and acronyms used in the report in this section. (Please see examples below.) This will provide an easy reference point for the reader for any abbreviations and acronyms that are used in the report.

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| a) TPE | TransPennine Express |
| b) NPR | Northern Powerhouse Rail |
| c) ECML | East Coast Main Line |
| d) IRP | Integrated Rail Plan |