

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

Date **21 September 2012**

Agenda item number

**6**

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 (MML)**

2. On 16th July the Government announced that for the period 2014 - 2019 it was making over £9 billion available for enhancements to the railway network. It also published its formal 'High level Output Statement' (HLOS) as required under the Railways Act 2005 which sets out the enhancements that the Government requires to be delivered 2014 - 2019.
3. As reported to previous meetings of this committee, the 2 Councils had been campaigning for the last 4 years to secure enhancements of the track that would allow reduction of the Nottingham – London journey time to 90 minutes from its current 104 minutes. This would require:-
  - the first £69million phase of MML LSI (Line Speed Increase) works, to raise the speed limits at a series of locations along the MML, which works Network Rail has in hand, scheduled for completion in 2014;
  - the second phase of the MML LSI works, notably raising the speed at a few more locations, most significantly at Market Harborough/Great Bowden;
  - the £11.6million upgrade of the track layout around Nottingham station, which will increase capacity and raise speeds, for which the County Council secured funding in October 2008, and which works will be undertaken in summer 2013; and
  - an enhanced layout at Leicester, similar to the works at Nottingham, but with a flyover to reduce congestion and delays caused to MML trains by freight trains.
4. Paragraphs 34 & 35 of the HLOS specify electrification of what is being called 'the electric spine' route from the south coast to Sheffield. This covers 7 lines from Southampton northwards, including 'Bedford - Nottingham and Derby, and Derby - Sheffield (Midland Main Line).

5. Crucially for our aspirations, paragraph 36 states "**opportunities should be pursued to speed journeys through efficient enhancements** in conjunction with the (electrification) improvements, **notably between Bedford and Corby and at Derby**. The Secretary of State wishes to see **sufficient capacity to provide for forecast freight flows through the electric spine at Leicester**. The industry is to undertake further development work to confirm the full scope and requirements for the delivery of this scheme, which the Secretary of State believes is deliverable within the Statement of Funds Available." (emphasis added).
6. Publication of the HLOS was followed that afternoon by a verbal statement given to the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Transport, Justine Greening, with subsequent questions from MPs. At our behest, Paul Blomfield MP asked Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central): "I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, but may I ask her for further clarification of her earlier answers about track improvements? **In particular, will the programme include track improvements at all three bottlenecks on the midland main line—Derby, Leicester and Market Harborough —without which we will not get the targeted improvements in journey times?**"  
Justine Greening: "I will need to confirm that specific point, but **I am certainly aware that track improvements will happen at Leicester. I believe that they will also happen at Derby, but I will need to find out about Market Harborough** and write to the hon. Gentleman." (emphasis added).
7. It is these the track upgrades at these 3 locations that would allow (and are necessary for) Nottingham - London journey times to be reduced to 90 minutes from 104 minutes at present, which will become 99 minutes in 2014 on completion of the initial phase of the linespeed works which is already funded. In fact we wouldn't want electrification to be done until the track upgrade has been done and the speed limits raised and capacity increased at Market Harborough, and Leicester and Derby - if the present track layout at any of those places was electrified now then we would be stuck for ever with the low speed/slow journeys and congestion.
8. As is clear from Justine Greening's answer the Government now requires the track upgrades at both Leicester and at Derby, which is really excellent news. This means that they will both definitely happen - the rail industry has to do what the Government requires. The enhancement at Market Harborough is not yet secure, and I am continuing to work to that end.
9. The HLOS was a story of national consequence. It says a lot for the effectiveness of the lobbying that the Midland Main Line was one of the most prominent schemes in the HLOS statement itself, in the parliamentary debate, and in the media coverage - indeed, the Midland Main Line was the main lead story on both national TV and radio news for most of Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July, and featured very prominently on Monday 16<sup>th</sup>.
10. Generally the press coverage was well informed. But it is worth setting out one aspect that sometimes gets muddled in the media: -

- **The cost of the track upgrades is £220million** (Market Harborough £30m, Leicester £120m, and Derby £70m). That is on top of the £69million currently being invested in the first phase of linespeed works, making a total of £290m. That investment produces a double benefit - faster journeys, and increased capacity (especially for more freight trains to get lorries off the roads);
- **electrification will cost a further £550million**, which is worth it primarily because it will reduce the operating costs of the MML by around £50million per annum. It will also produce environmental benefits - a reduction in Co2 emitted and other pollutants, and electric trains are quieter. But the electrification is not what produces the journey time reduction.

### Nottingham - Birmingham

11. The upgrade at Derby was part of the MML lobbying package to benefit MML passengers on trains via Derby, although Nottingham's MML trains do not go that way. However, the works at Derby will enormously benefit Nottingham – Birmingham trains.
12. At present, Nottingham – Birmingham trains take 77 minutes for 56¾ miles = 44mph. Average speeds between England's other 'Core City' conurbations are usually around 60mph. The reason that the Nottingham – Birmingham service is far slower than standard is because Nottingham – Birmingham trains have to negotiate 4 congested 'pinch-points' at Birmingham, Derby, Trent junction and Nottingham, each of which seriously constrains the times at which Nottingham – Birmingham trains can pass through.
13. As a result of our lobbying over the recent years, these pinch-points are being progressively eased:-
  - the forthcoming (2013) track upgrade around Nottingham station (see para 3 above),
  - the installation of extra track and higher speeds at Trent, reported to joint committee in 2009 and 2010, and
  - the upgrade at Derby that will result from the July 16th HLOS announcement.
14. Unfortunately, it is not possible to realise the journey time benefit of the enhancements at Nottingham or Trent until the Derby works are done. That is because even if trains can get to Derby earlier they just have to sit in the platform at Derby for longer until their onward path to Birmingham is available. However, with Nottingham and Trent 'freed-up' in 2013, then once the Derby enhancement works have been completed, which should be in 2017, Nottingham – Birmingham trains will be able to get an optimum quick path with no need to wait at all 3 locations, and it should be possible to reduce Nottingham – Birmingham journey times by at least ten minutes or more, bringing the Nottingham – Birmingham average speed much closer to the norm. Thus the HLOS commitment to the works at Derby will be hugely beneficial for the Nottingham – Birmingham service.

### East Coast Main Line

15. The HLOS also included £240m for further enhancements to the East Coast Main Line. This continues the well-established East Coast Main Line programme, for which investment of £509million is currently underway. Although none of this investment is in Nottinghamshire it will reduce delays, improve journey times and increase capacity for all East Coast Main Line services including those to/from Newark and Retford.

### Nottingham Station Hub scheme

16. City Council to supply update in September

### Other Schemes

17. Work continues on the many other schemes, including
- A second train per hour Nottingham – Newark;
  - Nottingham – Newark linespeed increase/journey time reduction, and increased service at intermediate stations;
  - Nottingham – Leeds linespeed increase/journey time reduction;
  - Radford junction linespeed increase/journey time reduction;
  - Nottingham – Skegness linespeed increase/journey time reduction, and increased service at intermediate stations;
- Further details will be reported to future joint committee meetings.

## **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](mailto:jim.bamford@nottscc.gov.uk)

Chris Carter, Development Department, Nottingham City Council

Tel: 0115 8763963

E-mail: [chris.carter@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:chris.carter@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

---