



REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS

RAIL UPDATE

Purpose of the Report

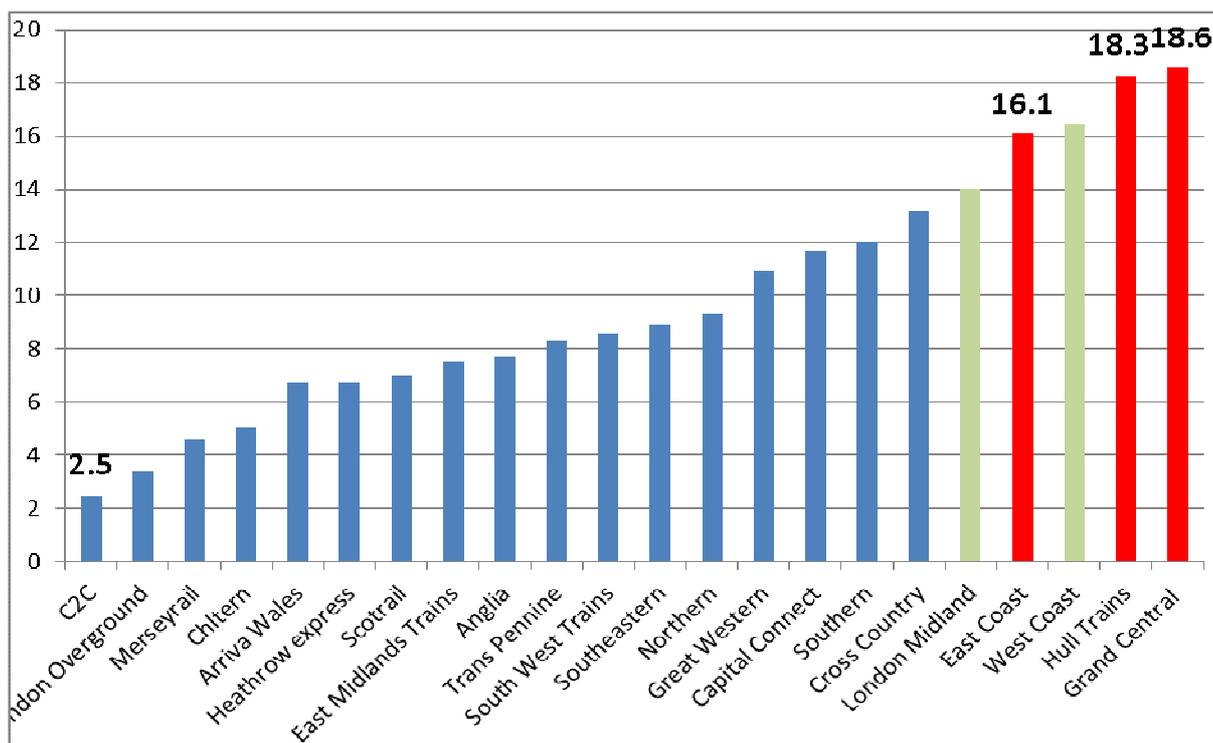
1. To inform Committee of recent developments on the East Coast Main Line (ECML), and seek approval for the actions being pursued.

Information and Advice

Reliability

2. The issues of most importance to rail passengers are
 - a) Value for money and
 - b) Reliability/punctuality.
3. The East Coast Main Line (ECML) has the worst punctuality on Britain's rail network. There are 22 Train Operating Companies, and as the graph shows, the 3 ECML operators are collectively the worst for having late and/or cancelled trains.

Percentage of trains that did not meet the punctuality targets, 2012/3 by Train Operating Company



4. The Government has set a minimum required standard of reliability for the next 5 years (April 2014 – March 2019), which is
 - Overall 92½ % of trains should arrive 'on time', which on long-distance services such as the ECML is defined as not more than ten minutes late; and
 - No more than 2½ % of trains more than 30 minutes late or cancelled.

These are overall target figures, which are an average for the whole rail network, and there will inevitably be some variation between different train operators, but the longstanding intention of Government is that all operators should try to reach the target. For the next 5 years, the Government has addressed the issue of the operators that currently lag behind the national standard of punctuality (of which the ECML is the worst)

“the Secretary of State requires that the industry focuses on improving the worst-performing routes and those on which lower levels of reliability have the greatest economic effect”.

5. The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) has a statutory duty to assess
 - Network Rail's plans re outputs and costs for each 5 year 'Control Period'; and
 - the delivery of those plans.

On 31st July ORR issued a formal judgement that Network Rail was in breach of its licence because reliability on long-distance services was so far below the Government's required standard. ORR assesses that on current plans and with current resources there is only a 45% - 50% chance of delivering the punctuality requirement for the next 5 years (2014-2019).

6. Network Rail's response has been to ask for the required reliability standard for the East Coast (the worst) and West Coast (the second worst) Main Lines to be lowered to just 88% i.e. to allow up to 12% ECML trains to be late or cancelled. That would allow an additional 12,675 ECML trains to be late or cancelled over the next 5 years (April 2014 – March 2019).

7. The alternative to lowering the standard would be to provide the resources necessary to deliver 92½ % reliability on the ECML. Unfortunately Network Rail has not yet clearly established what works at what cost would be necessary to deliver 92½ % reliability on the ECML.

8. ORR is due to announce on 31st October what standards Network Rail will be required to deliver over the next 5 years (April 2014 – March 2019), and what resources it can have to do so. Because it is not clear what work is required on the ECML the Council is proposing that there should be an 'East Coast Adjustment Mechanism', wherein the decision re the ECML is deferred until 2015, with Network Rail charged with drawing up detailed ECML plans by 31/3/2015, on which the ORR would then pass judgement. ORR has proposed exactly such an adjustment mechanism for civil engineering, for the identical reason that it is not clear what resources are needed for civil engineering over the next 5 years.

9. The Council is a member of the East Coast Main line local Authorities group (ECMA). Cllr Calvert has raised this issue and the need for an East Coast Adjustment Mechanism with ECMA. An update will be given at the meeting about what progress there has been with ECMA on this issue.

Timetable review

10. The rail report to the October 2012 Transport & Highways committee meeting set out the need for a timetable review on the ECML. Network Rail has recently decided to conduct a timetable review to take effect as from 2016, which is most welcome. To get full benefit from this review it would be necessary
- for DfT to instruct Network Rail to give priority to optimising the ECML service, with other services – e.g. commuter trains, local trains, freight trains - fitted in around the key long-distance services
 - for the review to be completed before the letting of the ECML franchise; and
 - for the review to be completed before the renewal by ORR of existing open access rights or the granting by ORR of any new 'open access' rights.

Statutory and Policy Implications

11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Committee:

- a) Notes the contents of this report;
- b) States its opposition to any reduction in punctuality standards that the rail industry is required to achieve on the ECML;
- c) States its belief that the 92½ % national reliability standard for the next 5 years (April 2014 – March 2019) that has been stipulated by the Secretary of State for the rail system as a whole, should apply to the ECML;
- d) States its belief that since resources on the ECML are insufficient to deliver the Government's 92½ % standard of reliability the answer is to ensure adequate resources, not to lower the standards;
- e) Endorses the need for an East Coast Adjustment Mechanism that would allow Network Rail, in consultation with relevant other bodies (including the Council), to establish what works are necessary to achieve the Government's 92½ % standard of reliability on the ECML; and
- f) Supports giving ECML services priority in the timetable review.

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (SHB.07.08.13)

Committee have power to decide the Recommendation.

Financial Comments (TMR 07/08/13)

There are no immediate financial implications as a result of this report.

Background Papers

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

The Districts affected are Ashfield, Broxtowe, Mansfield and Rushcliffe.