

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

Date **10 SEPTEMBER 2010** Agenda item number

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.

### **Rail issues**

#### Midland Main Line

2. As previously reported, Network Rail is now working on the detailed design of a £69million scheme to achieve an 8 minute reduction in the Sheffield - London journey time. This design work should be completed by now, and a meeting has been arranged for September at which Network Rail will report details of what will be the time saving for Nottingham to London.
3. In addition, the Councils have been making the case for getting an additional investment of £27million for some additional works:-
  - Provision of additional tracks ('freight loops') at Desborough to enable passenger trains to overtake freight trains, and
  - Realignment of the track at Market Harborough, to reduce curvature and so raise speeds from 60mph to 80mph or possibly 90mph.
4. This additional work has been supported by the House of Commons Select Committee for the East Midlands, Derby City Council, Leicester City Council, Sheffield City Council, and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority, all of which wrote to the then Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Adonis, supporting the request for the additional £27million investment.
5. Because of the general election purdah Lord Adonis was unable to make a formal public announcement, but on 6<sup>th</sup> April he wrote to Paddy Tipping MP (Chair of the East Midlands Select Committee) inviting the region to recommend, if it so wished, that the £27million come from the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA), and stating that he had asked officials at GOEM to pursue the issue. However, the RFA process has been set aside by the new Government, and all RFA schemes are being reviewed as part of the comprehensive spending review.

6. In his budget statement on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne MP, confirmed the new government's commitment to the investment of £69million in the Midland Main Line, stating "*First, even when money is so short, we will commit to important regional transport projects..... (including) improvements to the rail lines (from London) to Sheffield*". The Midland Main Line was one of only 5 transport schemes to be specified in the Chancellor's speech.
7. As agreed at the last Joint Committee, on 23<sup>rd</sup> July Cllr Jackson and Cllr Urquart wrote a joint letter to the new Secretary of State for Transport, Phillip Hammond MP and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, welcoming the budget commitment to the MML scheme, and urging that, within whatever is the new, reduced total amount that the comprehensive spending review makes available for former RFA schemes, that an additional £27million should be made available for the final element of the Midland Main Line scheme.
8. If it is approved, the additional £27m works to complement the £69m scheme should mean that the Nottingham - London journey time could be cut from the current 1¾ hours to 90 minutes as from 2014.

#### High Speed Rail

9. The new government is conducting a review of plans for a High Speed Rail network, including whether or not there should be - as announced in March 2010 - a line through the East Midlands. An announcement is expected in the autumn.

#### Nottingham Station Hub scheme

10. Work on the new Station Street cycle parking facility is complete and opened to the public on the 21<sup>st</sup> July. Funding and property agreements are now in place with Network Rail, enabling the contract for the new multi storey car park to be let in November 2010 with work due to commence on site early in 2011.

#### Infrastructure improvements

11. In conjunction with Network Rail, work continues on the large range of schemes and studies reported previously, including:
  - a study into raising the speed on the Nottingham to Grantham line, so as to reduce journey times and enable a substantial increase in service to Aslockton, Radcliffe and Netherfield,
  - a scheme to transform the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln line, with speeds raised to 90mph (see also paragraphs 16 - 18 below),
  - a scheme to raise speeds on the Nottingham - Leeds line and reduce journey times by 25 minutes,
  - a scheme to raise speeds on a section of the Nottingham - Manchester line and reduce journey times by 2 minutes, as the first stage of a much bigger reduction in journey times,

- a scheme to cut journey times between Nottingham, Beeston and Birmingham,
- a study of raising speeds on the northern section of the Robin Hood Line, and
- a study of whether it might be possible to reduce the costs of re-opening the Robin Hood Line to Ollerton.

Details will be reported to future joint committee meetings as work progresses.

#### Service changes to local trains

12. The next timetable change will be in December 2010. East Midlands Trains has written to stakeholders with details of a small number of changes that will be implemented, including:-
- All Sunday trains on the Robin Hood line will henceforth call at Bulwell, and
  - The 16.35 Lincoln - Nottingham - Leicester will call at Carlton, which will permit commuting
    - i) from Carlton to Lincoln (there is already a morning train from Carlton to Lincoln and this provides the missing return service), and
    - ii) from west of Nottingham to the Carlton area (there is already a morning train to Carlton and this provides the missing return westbound service),
13. The Council continues to press for
- an additional train at 07.00 from **Newark, Fiskerton, Bleasby, Lowdham, Burton Joyce and Carlton** to Nottingham,
  - an additional train at 19.30 from Nottingham to **Carlton, Lowdham, and Fiskerton to Newark** and Lincoln, and
14. The enhanced service that the Council secured at **Aslockton**, which commenced in December 2009, is doing good business so far, and has attracted around 2000 additional passengers.

#### Nottingham - Newark

15. The Stakeholders' Group, of which the County Council is part, has been considering how the issue of an enhanced level of service on this line might be taken forward. DfT is not proceeding with its previous plan for a direct Lincoln - London so as to save £9million per annum on the hire of the 25 vehicles that would have been necessary. Joint representations to DfT are being made by Nottinghamshire, Nottingham City, Newark & Sherwood, Lincolnshire, and Lincoln City, that by way of amelioration for the loss of those 25 vehicles, 2 vehicles should be made available to enhance the Nottingham - Newark service. If approved, those 2 vehicles would double the service from the current one train per hour to a train every 30 minutes, one of which would be non-stop and one of which would call at intermediate stations, with effect hopefully from May 2011.

16. A sum of £51million had been allocated from the Regional Funding Allocation (RFA) for works on the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln line, to raise speeds to 90mph and cuts journey times by around 15 minutes. The Council has been undertaking a review of the scheme with Network Rail, which has identified substantial costs savings on the scheme, and the estimated cost has reduced to £39.6million. Work continues to refine the works required, and it is hoped that the cost will reduce yet further.
17. As reported in paragraph 4 above, the RFA process has been set aside by the new Government, and all RFA schemes are being reviewed as part of the comprehensive spending review.
18. The two Councils are working closely with Newark & Sherwood, Lincolnshire, and Lincoln City Councils in pressing the case that, within whatever is the new, reduced total amount that the comprehensive spending review makes available for former RFA schemes, that an allocation should be made for the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln linespeed scheme, especially in view of its significantly reduced cost.
19. A marketing campaign in Newark, funded by Nottinghamshire County Council, commenced at the end of July. It involves
- the distribution of around 2500 free day-return rail tickets to residents of Newark, and
  - the provision of 300 free weekly Newark - Nottingham or Newark - Lincoln season tickets to households that have recently moved to Newark, to encourage those who commute to do so by rail.
- The purpose of the promotion is to raise patronage and revenue, thereby strengthening the revenue side of the business cases for both the additional services and for the linespeed scheme.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

25. It is recommended that the Committee note the contents of the report.

## **Background Papers**

26. 'High Speed Rail', DfT, March 2010;  
'Priorities for investment in the railways', House of Commons Transport Select Committee. 15 February 2010

## **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, Environment and Regeneration, Nottingham City Council  
Tel: 0115 915 55220  
E-mail: [chris.carter@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:chris.carter@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)

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