



EAST MIDLANDS RAIL FRANCHISE PUBLIC CONSULTATION “DRIVING GROWTH IN THE EAST MIDLANDS” RESPONSE OF CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL

Introduction

Campaign for Rail is an organisation based in the Midlands that advocates both general railway development and the best interests of all rail passengers and groups, including Rail User Groups. We are particularly interested in the development of passenger services, facilities for passengers at stations and on trains, freight development, new stations and, where appropriate, the re-opening of lines for new passenger services.

We welcome this opportunity to comment on the Department’s public consultation on the next East Midlands Rail Franchise which is to commence operation from August 2019. The following comments have been discussed at two successive meetings of our steering group some of whom are regular travellers on the services discussed.

We are disappointed at the decision of the Department not to complete full electrification of the Midland Main Line between London St. Pancras and Sheffield, with no electrification to take place north of Kettering. This is an incredibly short-term, short-sighted decision which does not give the East Midlands and South Yorkshire the high quality, fast inter-city rail service the region needs for its economic development and future prosperity. Electrification will have to take place sooner rather than later and a rolling programme across the across the network, giving confidence to the travelling public and rail operators is much better than a piecemeal stop-start approach.

The decision to route HS2 into and out of Sheffield Midland via the “classic route” of the Midland Main Line to connect with HS2 south of Clay Cross means a significant portion of the Midland Main Line will have to be electrified anyway during the lifetime of the planned franchise. It would make sense for the rest of the route to be wired.

The transport equipment manufacturing sector (including that relating to rail) in the East Midlands employs over 26,000 people and generates around £2.4 billion of GVA a year¹. For this sector to continue to thrive businesses need fast and efficient transport links – otherwise those businesses will relocate elsewhere, potentially outside of the UK. The region is being short changed by the Department’s decision not to complete full electrification of MML and it should be reversed.

¹ <http://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/EMC-CaseSummary-7.indd.pdf>

Responses to specific questions

How do you think closer co-operation between staff in Network Rail and the operator of the next East Midlands franchise can be achieved?

We understand that Network Rail's signallers and East Midlands Trains control staff are already co-located at Derby Rail Operating Centre. The crucial issue for future co-operation between the new TOC and Network Rail's planners will be the amount of independence that can be devolved from Network Rail's route headquarters at York to the staff responsible for the Midland Main Line and local routes in the East Midlands. Indeed, it could be argued that Network Rail should split the current London and North Eastern into separate areas covering the East Coast Main Line and Yorkshire, and the Midland Main Line and East Midlands (based in the region). At the very least, there should be a dedicated manager and route team based in the East Midlands and working with local authorities and other stakeholders.

How can the operator of the next East Midlands franchise engage with community rail partnerships or heritage railways to support the local economy to stimulate demand for rail services in the region?

The current operator of the East Midlands franchise has an excellent record of engagement with, and support for, the three CRPs in its network. This has, for instance, resulted in significant improvements to the environment and the general ambience at the seven stations on the North Staffordshire Line. As a result passenger footfall has risen and several of these stations have won awards at both County and National level. We would expect the next operator to continue this engagement with CRPs and extend it to include the new Station Adoption Groups that are now being formed.

Do you think that the operator of the train service, stations and support services should take the following into consideration when they run the franchise?

- **The environment?**
- **Equality?**
- **Communities in the areas they operate?**

Passengers generate a large amount of litter from discarded drinks containers, food and newspapers. The train operators have to collect and dispose of this to maintain a clean and tidy environment for passengers. The operator of the next franchise should be required to report how much of this on-board litter has been recycled.

We suggest that the next operator should appoint one or more Route Managers with a specific remit to liaise with Rail User Groups, District and Parish Councils across their network.

Do you agree with our proposed approach, which could reduce journey times on long distance services and increase the likelihood of getting a seat?

Yes. However capacity must be made available for growth in the InterCity market towards Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield and for the commuter market from Corby and Northamptonshire. We know from Network Rail's Route Studies that rail usage is growing and even with HS2 there will continue to be demand on the classic network from destinations not served by the high-speed route.

What are your suggestions about how to mitigate the potential loss of some direct services between Oakham, Melton Mowbray and London?

If the Department does not reverse the decision not to electrify the full length of MML between Sheffield and London then hybrid trains, able to use electric power to Kettering and then diesel from Kettering to Sheffield, will need to be procured. It is therefore rather disingenuous to claim that *“A consequence of operating electric trains between London and Corby could be the loss of direct services between London and Oakham and Melton Mowbray as there are no plans to electrify beyond Corby on this route”*. Applying that logic, passengers to Sheffield and Nottingham would lose their direct services as the wires are not going up.

The service from Oakham and Melton Mowbray to London should be maintained, using the hybrid stock it is proposed to make available to the incoming operator.

Which on-board facilities, in order of preference (these are listed in the response form), are most important to you:

All of these facilities are important to passengers, though first class accommodation may well be more important for business passengers using the InterCity services on MML. We would however urge that catering facilities are maintained and are not removed as they have been by other operators on their express services.

How could your local train services be changed to better meet your current and future needs?

One anomaly of the current service pattern is the lack of any through services from Stoke-on-Trent to Nottingham. We are aware that a significant number of passengers originating from the North Staffs Line formerly travelled through to Nottingham (under the previous Central Trains franchise) and it is arguable that the absence of a through service has held back the growth in passenger numbers at some stations - e.g. Uttoxeter, where the A50 offers a direct road alternative.

What additional train services would you wish to see provided in the next franchise?

A significant gap in the current regional service pattern is the absence of a direct service between Derby and Lichfield. Both the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas and Lichfield Cathedral attract significant numbers of visitors and a local service, even an off-peak service, would offer a good alternative to the busy A38 Trunk Road. We believe that the necessary reversing facility at Lichfield City could easily be provided by the use of a short length of the former South Staffs line.

Do you support the proposal to reopen the line between Shirebrook and Ollerton to passenger trains? If so, what sources of investment could be identified to fund this proposal?

We support, in principle, the re-introduction of passenger services to Clipstone, Edwinstone and Ollerton. Passenger services on the Robin Hood Line currently terminate for most of the day alternately at Worksop or Mansfield Woodhouse and it seems that the latter trains could relatively easily be extended over the 8 miles of existing freight track to Ollerton. However the single track section south of Kirkby restricts the number of trains that can be run on this line and any additional services may have to use the line from Ironville Junction via Pinxton, potentially also calling at Ilkeston and Langley Mill which would enhance the service provided at these stations.

Would you like additional fast trains from London each hour to call at Luton Airport Parkway?

Luton Airport is used as a hub by a number of the low-cost airlines, attracting passengers from across the UK, not just the London, Luton or Bedfordshire areas. There therefore does need to be services from the north of the route serving Luton Airport Parkway and providing connectivity, not just from London.

How could the train service be better at meeting the needs of passengers travelling to and from airports within the East Midlands franchise?

Passengers travelling overseas from the Birmingham area to some popular holiday destinations are known to use East Midlands Airport and it is therefore surprising that there is not a direct service from Birmingham New Street to East Midlands Parkway station.

Diverting the current (Cross Country) Cardiff - Nottingham service to run via Leicester would address this gap and provide additional airport connectivity for the West Midlands. We suggest that the slightly extended journey time would be offset by the significant gain in connectivity and the release in capacity on the busy line between Birmingham and Derby - which is already served by two fast Cross Country services per hour.

What ideas do you have for improving the current service on the Liverpool – Norwich route?

The stock used on the Liverpool – Norwich route is operated by Class 158 DMUs which are now 27 years old and will need replacement during the life of the new franchise. Crowding is an issue on a number of Liverpool – Norwich services so additional capacity for passengers will need to be provided.

We do not support splitting the Liverpool – Norwich service at Nottingham, as it would make rail less attractive for through passengers wishing to travel between East Anglia and the North. Based on figures provided by East Midlands Trains², it would inconvenience around 350,000 passengers per annum who use the route to travel through Nottingham and would extend journey times.

Are you in favour of these route changes?

- **Birmingham – Nottingham**
- **Birmingham – Leicester/Stansted**

Whilst it would be nice to have a through service from Birmingham to Norwich the diversion of the current (Cross Country) Birmingham - Stansted Airport service to Norwich would inevitably result in the loss of a through service from Birmingham to Cambridge as well as to the Airport. We cannot therefore support this change of destination. However, running alternate services from Birmingham to either Norwich or Stansted Airport might be seen as a reasonable compromise.

We strongly support the transfer of both Birmingham - Derby and Birmingham - Leicester local services to the East Midlands franchise at the earliest opportunity. We note that many of the stations served, including two staffed stations, are already managed by East Midlands Trains. We would also welcome the possible extension of some services to Lincoln providing this did not result in poor timekeeping.

However we would also like to see the existing local service from Worcester to Birmingham, which is part of the West Midland franchise, linked across Birmingham to either Leicester or Derby as was suggested in Network Rail's (May 2011) West Midlands Route Utilisation Strategy. It may, therefore, be more appropriate to transfer one of these Inter-Urban services to the new West Midlands franchise where it will share rolling stock and stabling facilities with services to Shrewsbury.

² <http://www.edp24.co.uk/news/politics/norwich-could-lose-direct-train-link-to-liverpool-1-3658989>

**Would you like to see any other routes transferred to or from the East Midlands franchise?
If so, which routes?**

One option that could be considered and which offer significant connectivity benefits between the West and East Midlands is the provision of Birmingham – Nottingham services routed via Leicester, rather than Derby. This could be done via the diversion of the current Cardiff – Nottingham Cross Country service, providing a direct service from Gloucester, Cheltenham, parts of Worcestershire and Birmingham to Loughborough and East Midlands Parkway, or routing the suggested Inter-Regional service suggested in the West Midlands RUS onwards to Nottingham.

This would also address the shortage of capacity between Leicester and Nottingham identified in the East Midlands RUS and would also provide a benefit for passengers travelling between Coventry and Nottingham, which requires travelling via Birmingham New Street as there is currently no through service between Nuneaton and Nottingham.

What more could be done to improve access to, and provide facilities at stations, including for those with disabilities or additional needs?

The "Access for All" scheme has been very successful in providing level access to platforms at a number of stations in the region which were not previously fully accessible. It is disappointing that the funding allocated for both this scheme and Network Rail's "Small Stations Improvements Fund" was sharply reduced in Control Period 5.

What could be done to improve the way tickets are sold and provided?

The traditional "Orange Stripe" tickets have the merit of being a uniform design which is recognized across the mainland network and will operate all current designs of ticket gates, including London Underground gates. Recent changes to the layout of these tickets have made them significantly more difficult for staff to read, with passengers also frequently offering the wrong ticket for validation. The introduction of "paper roll" tickets in some areas, and more recently on board trains, is a disaster as these are easily lost, will not operate standard ticket gates and cannot be 'cancelled' electronically.

We also note that Willington (managed by East Midlands Trains but where all the services are provided by Cross Country) and Spondon do not have a ticket machine. These should be provided.

What changes to the fares structure would be of benefit to you?

There is no doubt that the range of fares offered has become more complex since privatisation; to the benefit of the few who understand the system but leaving many passengers paying more for their journey than is legally necessary. Fares on the Midland Main Line are notably more expensive than fares for journeys of the same distance on other routes. In the medium term, the industry should move, progressively, to a uniform "rate per mile" fare structure for all inter-available single and return tickets. In the short term the combined price of the cheapest 'split-ticketing' fares should be the "normal" fare on most routes, and Single fares should be capped at 60% of the Return fare.

Following the success of the "Two Together Railcard", the introduction of a national 25-65 Adult Railcard would be welcome.

How could staff be more effective in providing the service and assistance that passengers need on a modern railway network?

The role of the conductor/guard should be retained. It is clear passengers value the presence of a second member of staff on a train, particularly when services are disrupted en route as they can provide information and assistance to passengers, and on evening/night services.

However, the conductor/guard should be visible. It is not acceptable for them to hide out of sight in the back cab. There should be a physical presence in the passenger accommodation at all times, checking tickets. Door opening at stations should be done by the driver, though for safety reasons, it should still be the guard's responsibility to close the doors after checking the platform is clear. This would also reduce dwell times, which we observe to be a common cause of accumulated lateness.

To provide improved information on performance

We welcome the requirement, suggested in the consultation, for the next operator to provide regular reports on their performance. These should take the form of posters displayed at all the principal stations served by the East Midlands franchise showing their performance over recent industry periods, disaggregated by route or service group. This was something that was inexplicably omitted from the current franchise contract.

An additional requirement for the operator of the next franchise to report on the proportion of litter that has been recycled would be welcome.

If there is one criticism of the present franchise it would be the high number of meaningless adverts that are now displayed on some of their stations, crowding out real information.

To improve security and safety on trains and at stations

We would expect there to be close working with the British Transport Police to provide support and reassurance to passengers and staff, as well as to deter crime and anti-social behaviour at stations (many of the local stations in the East Midlands are unstaffed).

Are there any other areas that you think it is important for us to consider that have not already been discussed in this consultation?

Passengers travelling on long distance services do not always see the advance information that is provided to local passengers about planned blockades in other regions. More publicity should be provided at all principal stations about planned blockades elsewhere on the network. For instance information on the planned blockade at Bristol Parkway should have been prominently displayed at Birmingham, Leicester and Nottingham so that passengers travelling on Cross Country services to the West Country will have advance information of extended journey times that could affect their holiday plans. The blockade planned at Derby next year will, similarly, have a wide impact on the timing of many passengers' long distance journeys.

***Campaign for Rail
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