



Passenger Focus response to Network Rail East Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy draft for consultation

September 2007

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Passenger Focus is the independent national rail consumer watchdog. This paper sets out our response to the consultation draft of Network Rail's East Coast Main Line (ECML) Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS).
- 1.2 In preparing this response Passenger Focus has drawn on evidence from its National Passenger Survey, from our passenger priorities research and other research findings, from consultation with stakeholders and contact with passengers.

2. General comments

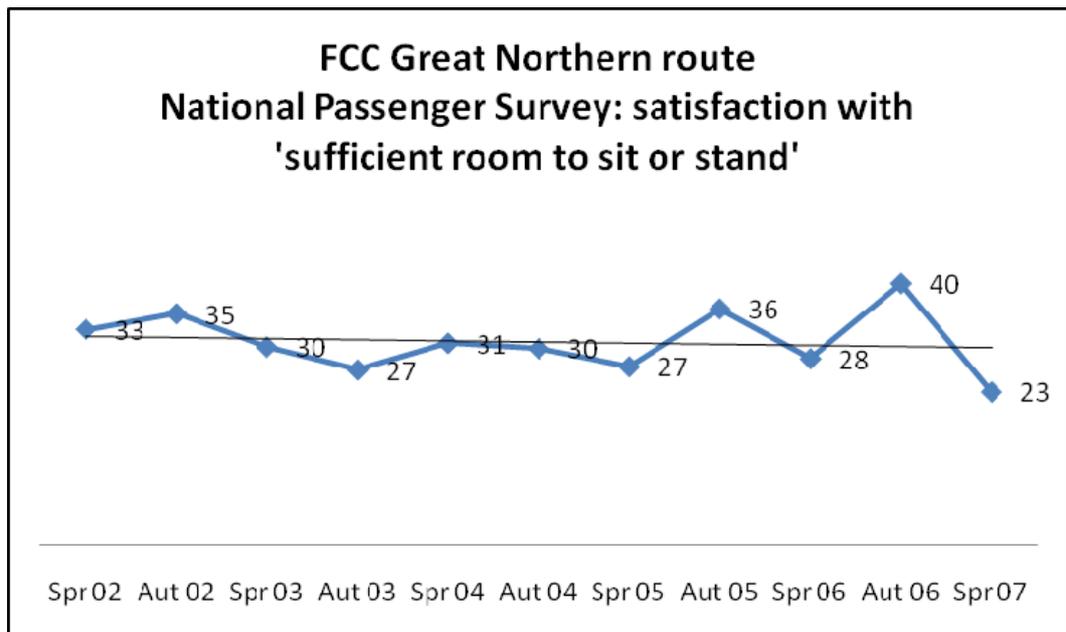
- 2.1 We support the broad thrust of many of the options. Overall, however, Passenger Focus finds the draft for consultation of the ECML RUS surprising for the following reasons:
 - The document describes the routes as they are today and gives a list of possible options. However it does not appear to constitute a recommended draft strategy, either for the ECML itself or for North Eastern England as a region.
 - Many critical pieces of development work or analysis were apparently incomplete when the draft RUS was finalised.
 - There is no indicative standard hour or indicative peak timetable for the proposed Long Distance High Speed service pattern, making it impossible to determine whether they will meet passengers' needs.
 - The document does not cover passenger access to stations in the RUS area.
 - A number of identified 'gaps' do not have a recommended solution in the draft RUS.

These issues make it difficult to determine whether what is set out in the draft RUS will meet the high level objectives Passenger Focus identified for it. These were:

- Deliver the necessary capacity for Long Distance High Speed trains to link the key cities on the ECML with London, Cross Country and Trans-Pennine destinations to the frequency and with the capacity required to develop and sustain the markets and meet strong growth that is likely to materialise in the commuter, business and leisure markets.
 - Deliver the necessary capacity to alleviate current overcrowding on London commuter services at the south end of the route and cater for strong growth. This includes services from/to Newark, Grantham, Peterborough, Huntingdon, St. Neots, Ely, Cambridge, the Royston corridor, Stevenage, Welwyn Garden City and the Hertford loop.
 - Deliver the necessary capacity to meet current demand and accommodate growth on other, mainly local services that run over the ECML itself or connect into it.
 - Deliver a high level of punctuality on all services, although recognising the eventual trade off between very high levels of punctuality and route capacity.
- 2.2 Passenger Focus makes the following general comments in relation to the strategy and its implementation:
 - 2.2.1 Demand. The level of demand predicted for London inner suburban, London outer suburban and Long Distance High Speed services to 2016 makes 'do minimum'

options out of the question as it would be inconsistent with achieving the 'load factors' set out in paragraph 4.20 of the 'Delivering a Sustainable Railway' White Paper.

- 2.2.2 Implementation. There must be no time-lag between demand growth occurring and new capacity being provided: the level of overcrowding in the interim would be intolerable to passengers. Implementation of these options must start immediately.
- 2.2.3 Peak crowding. The RUS should be guided by the objective that no passenger should stand, other than by choice, for over 20 minutes on a London commuter route. That is, irrespective of whether a 'standing allowance' technically applies because of a train's stopping pattern. It is important to note that, while it is clearly desirable to achieve a strong Benefits to Cost Ratio (BCR), the industry cannot opt out of achieving the White Paper Load Factors just because there is a weak business case. The RUS should seek to address the current low passenger satisfaction with the 'train - sufficient room for all the passengers to sit/stand' factor in the National Passenger Survey (NPS). The graph below shows NPS data for passenger satisfaction in the peak on the First Capital Connect Great Northern routes.



- 2.2.4 Off-peak crowding. The RUS must seek to avoid off-peak crowding. A train with a Load Factor above c. 70% will, in terms of quality of passenger experience, feel crowded. Passenger Focus notes that the White Paper supports this point in paragraph 4.20. Families may not easily be able to find seats together: their image of a hassle free, relaxing train journey destroyed. In addition, the challenge of meeting peaks in leisure demand, whether seasonal or connected with entertainment or sporting events, should be addressed by the RUS.

- 2.2.5 Line speed improvements. All future track renewals, level crossing upgrades, resignalling schemes etc. should be designed to facilitate upgrade of the line speed to match the capability of rolling stock that is primarily used on it. The railway needs to rediscover the art of reducing journey time through small, incremental increases in line speed over several years. Please also see comments in section five, below, regarding Option 3.5.
- 2.2.6 Pricing. We note in Paragraph 6.7.4 (assessment of Option 3.3), page 106 of the draft RUS, that without additional services “there would be a need to manage crowding by increasing fares at times of high demand”. Passenger Focus is opposed to any proposal to ‘price off’ existing and future commuter demand as a means of balancing supply and demand. It should be noted that recent research undertaken by Passenger Focus (Rail passengers’ priorities for improvements: Summary of research conducted by MVA consultancy for Passenger Focus, July 2007) shows that value for money is passengers’ number one priority for improvement.
- 2.2.7 Engineering access. The balance between engineering access and passenger utility needs to be redressed. It is vital that there is time for the railway to be properly maintained and renewed, but there must be no long term acceptance that the railway is shut completely at points several weekends each year. We are moving towards a 24-7 society, with Sundays in particular seeing strong demand for travel. Furthermore, securing increased utilisation of rolling stock and track will help improve the value for money delivered by the industry. The final RUS should recommend how engineering requirements can be accommodated with significantly less disruption to passenger services: with additional Long Distance High Speed trains on the ECML and higher load factors there will be real practical problems with ‘bus-ing’ the quantity of passengers who will be travelling in future. In particular, complete closure of four track routes and those with bi-directional signalling is unacceptable. Please also see comments below under Gap 8 regarding diversionary routes.
- 2.2.8 Regular interval ‘clockface’ timetable. A regular ‘clockface’ timetable should ideally be introduced on all routes. This would not only provide passenger benefits in itself (i.e. the ‘no need for a timetable’ benefit), but would allow branch line services to be organised to connect to/from main line trains on a repeating basis. Allied to this, it is desirable that the timetable in one direction on each route ‘mirrors’ that in the opposite, e.g. if trains to Leeds call at Retford, then trains from Leeds should call at Retford. This avoids situations in which there is a good service in one direction but a poor service in the other.

3. Passenger Focus comments on issues highlighted in the consultation draft

3.1 Depots and stabling

Passenger Focus has two points to make:

- Page 52 of the draft RUS sets out the current situation. Has the RUS considered the maintenance and berthing implications of increased rolling stock requirements for the various options listed?
- Passengers expect trains to be clean, inside and out. If standards slip it adds to passenger perception of poor value for money and it deters discretionary custom: why sit in a dirty train when you could go in your own car? The final RUS must make recommendations about:
 - Facilities to carry out cleaning (water, power, lighting, rubbish disposals facilities, structures to aid access to trains with vacuum cleaners, toilet servicing etc.). The adequacy of these needs to be reviewed as part of an overall depots and stabling strategy.
 - During engineering works in the area, the maintenance of power supplies to carriage sidings where periodic heavy cleans and overnight cleaning is carried out is a must, not a luxury. We cannot over-emphasise the nonsense that when power isolations are required on a main line, trains cannot be cleaned in an adjacent depot. Is shore supply an alternative to maintaining overhead power at locations such as Welwyn Garden City, Letchworth and Nene Sidings, Peterborough?

3.2 Peak crowding on regional, i.e. non-London, commuter services

The issue of peak crowding on regional commuter services is covered in Options 6.8 (Middlesbrough) and 7.1 (Newcastle) in the draft RUS. The Greater Anglia RUS draft for consultation makes an important point about regional commuter services: “passengers are likely to be prone to switch to car if expected to travel regularly in overcrowded conditions.” The final ECML RUS must address these gaps, presumably through train and platform lengthening. Otherwise, the White Paper load factors and the railway’s ability to offer a viable alternative to car-based commuting will be compromised.

4. Issues not highlighted in the draft RUS

4.1 Passenger access to railway stations

We are very surprised that the draft RUS says nothing at all about how its prediction of 40% extra Long Distance High Speed passengers, 17-21% more outer suburban passengers (predicted by First Capital Connect to be 40%) and 44% more North East England passengers are going to get to and from the station. All three RUSs ‘established’ so far cover the issue in some detail, including car parking at stations, and the Greater Anglia RUS draft for consultation recommends in Option 22 “Develop an overall access to the station strategy”.

We believe the final ECML RUS should propose development of an overall strategy leading to a package of multi-modal measures to meet the level of expected demand in 2017, particularly in the light of paragraphs 10.58 to 10.64 of the White Paper. This should include the ‘secondary’ lines where, even given lower overall rail demand, parking provision is often

inadequate. Beneath that overall strategy we believe there should be a station-specific 'travel plan' for all stations with significant footfall (similar to those prepared by schools, hospitals, major employers and airport operators). Issues to be considered include:

- how to encourage bus use
- how to encourage walking and cycling
- how to encourage greater use of branch line services rather than rail-heading to a main line station
- where, and in some instances whether, to expand car parking, taking into account train service pattern issues, highway capacity, town planning and land availability issues.

We believe that it is important for the final RUS to acknowledge the key findings of 'Getting to the station' (Passenger Focus, 2007). In particular, that attempting to restrict the supply of car parking at stations to encourage use of alternative modes may be counter-productive and that lack of car parking may already be suppressing demand for rail travel altogether. This work was undertaken primarily to inform Passenger Focus' response to the Greater Anglia RUS. However, it included the Hitchin to Shepreth Junction route covered by the ECML RUS and is likely to be broadly representative of passengers using the 'GN outers'. When asked what they would do if it became difficult to park at the station they currently use, passengers said they would:

- get a lift to that station (18% of respondents at Harlow Town) and be collected by car again later
- drive to another station (38% of respondents at Royston)
- make the complete journey by car instead (17% of respondents at Witham)
- travel earlier in order to secure a space in the car park at their station (24% of respondents at Witham).

4.2 **Performance**

GNER Public Performance Measure (PPM) punctuality is unacceptably low at 82.7 in 2006/07. We believe the final RUS should indicate how it will contribute to National Express East Coast achieving 90.1% PPM on Intercity East Coast services by January 2010 – itself a staging post to the White Paper target of 92.6%. The RUS should identify the specific investments required to achieve much-improved PPM and cost them for inclusion in the Network Rail Strategic Business Plan.

4.3 **Capacity to operate the railway in a de-graded condition**

The ECML has virtually no bi-directional signalling south of Doncaster. We believe the final RUS should highlight the challenges this presents to managing secondary delay and make recommendations about future signalling renewals. By way of example, it is surely unacceptable that an infrastructure defect on one line of the two-track section south of Peterborough can destroy the morning peak while conventional Single Line Working is put in place?

4.4 **Connections**

Although the issue of connections between services is referred to in 6.5.2 and 6.2.3 of the draft RUS, Passenger Focus believes that the final RUS should signal to the industry that in

planning future services all reasonable endeavours should be made to facilitate key connections in the routes covered by this RUS.

4.5 **Identifying the infrastructure works required to deliver the options listed**

Various infrastructure schemes are listed on pages 16 and 17 of the draft RUS. While quite properly the RUS focuses on the outputs to be achieved in relation to gaps identified, Passenger Focus suggests that to aid stakeholder understanding the final RUS is clearer about which infrastructure schemes are required to deliver which options. It is also important that stakeholders understand which schemes will be included in the Network Rail Strategic Business Plan.

4.6 **Passenger information systems at stations**

Local stakeholders have highlighted that the passenger information systems at many stations in North East England, as well as Dunbar, are poor or non-existent. We suggest that, to inform renewal and enhancement planning, the RUS recommends a comprehensive review of such systems in conjunction with the train operating companies managing stations in the RUS area.

4.7 **Cambridge peak capacity – longer term**

In section five, below, we indicate support for Option 2.3, the progressive implementation of 12-car trains on outer suburban peak services. We believe it would also be appropriate in respect of Cambridge to Kings Cross services, where growth is exceptionally strong, for the final RUS to comment on the measures that will be required once all peak trains are 12 cars and they are all full to capacity. Extra peak paths? 16-car trains, as floated in paragraph 5.28 of the White Paper?

5. Specific options

5.1 As stated in 2.1, above, Passenger Focus supports the broad thrust of many of the options, but overall finds the draft ECML RUS surprising. We have the following specific comments in relation to the options proposed:

- **Gap 1: London inner suburban services**

- **Option 1.1 – extension of all inner suburban peak services to six-car.**

We support Option 1.1, but only as an interim solution: the draft RUS itself states that the option “will not be sufficient to meet projected passenger growth on its own”.

- **Option 1.2 – run additional peak services on Hertford loop to Moorgate/Kings Cross**

We note that this option is not recommended in the draft RUS and that “further development work is planned which may improve the business case”. It is vital, now that there is clarity about the Thameslink Programme, that the final RUS sets out a clear strategy to provide sufficient capacity on this route to meet expected growth.

- **Option 1.3 – increase inner suburban off-peak service to four trains per hour, Mondays to Saturdays**

We support all three sub-options of Option 1.3. The necessary timetable development work, in particular to demonstrate that performance of the outer suburban services will not be compromised, must be complete in time for the final RUS to make an unqualified recommendation about all three sub-options. It is unfortunate that this work was not completed prior to publication of the draft RUS.
- **Option 1.4 – increase inner suburban services to four trains per hour on Sunday**

We question the decision not to recommend a frequency enhancement on inner suburban services on Sundays on the grounds that it will frequently be disrupted by engineering works. How many disrupted Sundays are felt to be too many to justify the enhancement? We are uncomfortable with the idea that passengers are denied an improved service – and one that has been assessed as financially positive – on the grounds that it cannot be run throughout the year. Subject to effective planning of services on Sundays when the full service cannot operate alongside diverted trains, we believe this enhancement should proceed.
- **Option 1.5 – run trains to/from Moorgate after 2200 on weekdays and at weekends**

The principle of providing a consistent service to passengers at all times of the day and week we support. However, Passenger Focus believes that Network Rail should fund passenger research to better understand where passengers are travelling to/from at these times, as well as their preference between Kings Cross and Moorgate, prior to the RUS making a final recommendation about this option.
- **Gap 2: London outer suburban services**

 - **Option 2.1 – inner suburban services to run no further north than Welwyn Garden City**

Subject to careful timetabling to ensure connectivity is maintained between stations (e.g. that in the peak some trains call at both Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn North), Passenger Focus supports this proposal as a means to release capacity to provide more paths for outer suburban services. The final RUS should confirm that capacity is or will become available for the units affected to stable other than at Letchworth.
 - **Option 2.2 – implement revised peak period timetable on the Cambridge line**

Passenger Focus supports the broad thrust to FCC’s proposals to increase peak capacity on the Great Northern route, including the adjustments proposed following its ‘do you mind if I sit here?’ public consultation.

- **Option 2.3 – progressive implementation of 12-car outer suburban peak services**

We support this option (although please note our comments in paragraph 4.5, above) but have a comment in relation to the detail on Page 102 of the draft RUS which states “services for Kings Lynn would split at Cambridge”. There is no indication about the work that has been undertaken to determine whether that is necessarily appropriate from the perspective of:

- providing adequate peak capacity Ely-Cambridge-London/London-Cambridge-Ely
- the operational robustness of coupling and uncoupling units at Cambridge
- serving the proposed station at Chesterton.

This highlights a danger that neither the ECML RUS nor the Greater Anglia RUS cover the Kings Lynn-Ely-Cambridge-London route as a whole, in particular the present and future role of the Ely to Cambridge section in serving the Greater Cambridge area. Please also see our comments about Gap 10.

In our response to the draft of the Greater Anglia RUS, Passenger Focus called for a ‘mini RUS’ to examine the routes running north from Cambridge and leading to an improved timetable. Amongst the things this would do is consider “whether proposals in the First Capital Connect Great Northern capacity study are sufficient to meet demand from Kings Lynn and Ely to 2016.”

- **Option 2.4 – additional 12-car capability to alleviate constraint at King’s Cross station**

We support the timetable development work recommended in this option.

- **Gap 3: Long Distance High Speed services**

- **Option 3.1 – lengthening of the Long Distance High Speed train fleet**

We note the conclusion that lengthening the current fleet is not a realistic option and support the draft RUS recommendation that peak and shoulder peak Long Distance High Speed paths should be taken by trains no shorter than eight cars in length.

- **Option 3.2 – implementation of a repeating standard hour Long Distance High Speed timetable**

We support the objective in this option and note the conclusion that timetable changes to achieve it should be implemented when the more intensive service envisaged in Option 3.3 is introduced.

- **Option 3.3 – increase Long Distance High Speed service at King’s Cross to eight trains per hour peak, six trains per hour off-peak**

While this appears to be a logical increment on the current timetable, without an indicative standard hour timetable it is impossible for Passenger Focus to conclude whether the ‘devil in the detail’ of Option 3.3 would be good or bad for passengers. Option 3.3, as currently expressed, raises more questions than it provides answers:

for example, will a regular Peterborough to Edinburgh direct journey will be part of the standard hour?

- **Meeting the demand/managing crowding.** It is not clear what level of crowding is predicted to occur by 2017 with a six trains per hour (eight in the peak) Long Distance High Speed timetable. Page 107 simply states “crowding would be reduced significantly, but additional demand would also be generated”. The final RUS should set out the level of overcrowding expected to occur under Option 3.3, from which stakeholders can conclude whether the intervention will be sufficient.
- **Segregation of services into distinct markets.** We have three comments:
 - a. The draft RUS highlights that the two-track section between Stoke Summit and Doncaster is critical to ECML capacity in the off-peak. Option 3.3 does not explain how having the sixth path calling Peterborough, Grantham, Newark, Retford, Doncaster alongside other trains running “fast” and the two freight paths, has been determined to represent best use of available capacity. In the past it has always been argued that a train with this calling pattern is extremely capacity-hungry. Given that the journey time on this “stopper” will be slower than all other passenger trains in the timetable, will it not load poorly and in practice contribute little to enhancing capacity?
 - b. Passenger Focus is in favour of attempting to speed up journey times from London to Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh. However, connectivity and service level at intermediate stations must be maintained.

- **Option 3.4 – removal of intermediate stops in Long Distance High Speed services**

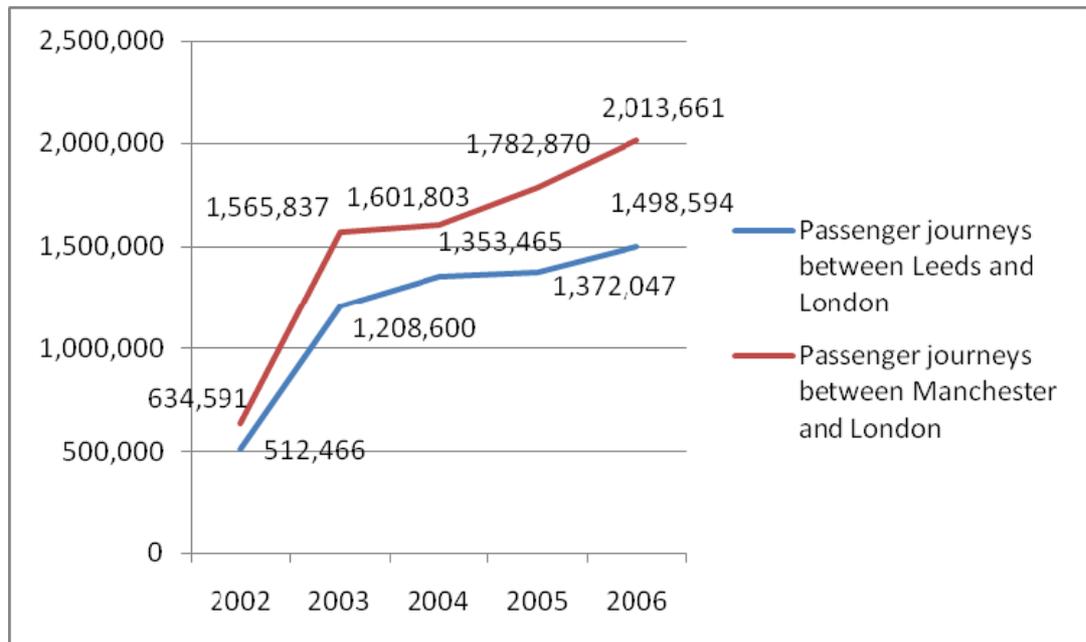
Without a detailed understanding of which stops would be removed and the adequacy of the alternative – connecting – service, it is impossible to conclude whether this would be good or bad for passengers.

- **Option 3.5 – increase line-speeds on East Coast Main Line**

We believe the final RUS should signal that line-speeds will be increased wherever possible as part of renewals and other projects. It is important that higher line-speed features as one means of reducing journey times, alongside timetabling solutions.

- **Option 3.6 – destinations off the main East Coast Main Line**

It is desirable to consider potential new markets off the core route and we welcome the recommendation that this option is developed further. Passenger Focus believes the final RUS should also set out the railway’s strategy to respond effectively to the growing London to Leeds market between now and 2017. It should be noted that Euston to Manchester goes to three trains per hour in December 2008, as does Euston to Birmingham. LENNON, the rail industry computer program that records data based on ticket sales, shows that the Leeds market is growing strongly. In 2006/07, i.e. before the *two* trains per hour GNER service commenced, passenger numbers were just 500,000 fewer than the Manchester market that will be served by three trains per hour in 15 months’ time. It is reasonable to assume that London to Leeds will require three trains per hour before 2017 and the railway must have a strategy to respond.



Note: Data for Manchester = Manchester Victoria, Manchester Piccadilly, Manchester Oxford Road, Manchester Central Zone, Manchester BR (group code), Deansgate, Salford and Salford Crescent to and from London combined. Leeds = Leeds only to and from London.

- **Gap 4: ECML North service pattern**

- **Option 4.1 – York to Newcastle: improvement to timetable spread**
- **Option 4.2 – Newcastle to Edinburgh: improvement to timetable spread**
- **Option 4.4 – Additional Dunbar stops in Long Distance High Speed services**

We believe that the final RUS should give a far clearer strategic lead in respect of timetabling on these sections and how the timetable should achieve a strategic objective to improve the service provided to intermediate stations. For the draft of the Route Utilisation *Strategy* to conclude, in effect, that the timetable will be as the timetable will be is unfortunate. Is it right that the Cross Country timetable should drive the Route Utilisation *Strategy* on the ECML north of York? Options 4.1 and 4.2 indicate that, by default, the strategy north of York is to 'flight' Long Distance High Speed trains in order to create freight capacity. However the pros and cons of this approach, for passengers and freight users, are barely discussed. Furthermore, in relation to any alternative approach "no specific infrastructure requirements (have been) identified at this stage" and "no (financial and economic analysis) has been undertaken". Passenger Focus remains of the view that the current spread of services represents a 'gap' and it is a gap that the draft RUS does not address. Should not the Route Utilisation *Strategy* seek to address the undesirable situation in which the two Edinburgh to York trains each hour leave within five minutes of each other (and between 09.00 and 16.00 are still variously between five and 15 minutes apart at York)? Should not the RUS seek to improve the service provided at intermediate

stations? We believe the final RUS should set out a *strategy* to address these gaps, something that the draft does not achieve. The question of a new Edinburgh-bound platform at Dunbar should be considered further: is it right to stick with the current capacity-hungry, performance-risky arrangements until 2017?

- **Option 4.3 – Newcastle to Edinburgh: semi fast service**

This is inextricably linked to the generic issues raised in relation to 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4. However, in respect of this specific option, we believe that the final RUS should leave the door open to further discussion about how this option might be refined to improve the BCR to the point that it becomes acceptable to potential funding parties. The conclusion as currently worded (Page 114 of the draft RUS) is unhelpfully ‘final’. It should be noted that East Lothian is an affluent, growing area and the benefits and disbenefits of this service calling at an additional station, one of Musselburgh, Drem and Longniddry should be considered.
- **Option 4.5 – Berwick on Tweed to Edinburgh local service**

Again, this is linked to the issues raised in relation to 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4. However, we welcome the commitment to re-run the appraisal once further evidence is available regarding likely demand at the new intermediate stations. In the final RUS the performance impact of additional services on this section of route needs to be transparent.
- **Option 4.6 – North Berwick to Edinburgh half-hourly off-peak weekday service**

Again, linked to the issues raised in relation to 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4. However, we welcome that the door has been left open in relation to this option, with stakeholders invited to consider ways to strengthen the business case. It is surprising that the draft RUS does not consider the case for the xx.37 from Edinburgh and xx.20 from North Berwick pattern to run each hour until 23.37 (00.20 return), eliminating the present gap in Edinburgh departures between 21.37 and 23.07. Passenger Focus believes the final RUS should recommend this very modest service enhancement. As with all additional services on this section of route, the performance impact needs to be transparent.
- **Gap 6: Tees Valley services**

Passenger Focus has the following generic points to make in relation to the Options listed under Gap 6:

- It appears that the draft RUS has tested solutions suggested by the RPA, rather take an agreed list of ‘gaps’ and develop ‘options’ to address them. Perhaps the RUS process is obliged to work in this way? The draft RUS closes the door on Options 6.1, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, but the gaps they were developed to tackle remain unaddressed. Passenger Focus wishes to understand how the final RUS proposes to address these gaps? Have variations to the RPA schemes been developed and tested?
- MOIRA (a rail industry demand modelling tool) has known limitations in respect of accurately predicting demand for services that are entirely new – or substantially improved. This must not be overlooked. Also, the impact on MOIRA data of

uncollected fares, resulting from staff being unable to complete their duties because of crowding, must be considered.

- **Option 6.1 – Introduction of a new Sunderland – Hartlepool – Stockton – Darlington service**

We believe it is important that the final RUS leaves the door open for further consideration of how the gaps this option is intended to meet might be addressed.

- **Option 6.2 – Extension or diversion of trans-Pennine services via the Durham Coast**

Passenger Focus opposes any suggestion that the existing trans-Pennine Newcastle terminator be diverted via the Durham Coast and therefore supports the draft RUS recommendation not to progress Option 6.2(b). Such a diversion away from the ECML would give significant passenger disbenefit. However it is important that the final RUS leaves the door open for further consideration of how the gaps this option is intended to meet might be addressed.

- **Option 6.3 – Improved Tees-Tyne link via the East Coast Main Line**

Current journey time for passengers in the peak between Middlesbrough (population 134,855 in 2001 census) and Newcastle (population 259,536 in 2001 census) is one hour 12 minutes: two direct trains via Darlington and the ECML. Off-peak journey time is one hour 20 minutes (hourly direct train via Hartlepool and Sunderland) or approximately one hour 10 minutes/one hour 15 minutes with a change at Darlington, generally twice each hour. In contrast the RAC journey planner website gives a road journey in medium traffic conditions of exactly one hour. It is also worth noting the other public transport options: Arriva run every 30 minutes between Middlesbrough and Newcastle (X1) taking two hours, while Go-Ahead run hourly taking one hour 20 minutes (X10). This suggests that there is a market for public transport between these major conurbations, just 40 miles apart, which the railway is not serving effectively at present. Passenger Focus is concerned that the door is being closed on this scheme prematurely, despite the doubts about MOIRA's ability to forecast in respect of new services and – as far as we can see from the draft RUS document – without discussion about how the £28.3 million operational expenditure could be reduced to improve the Benefits to Costs Ratio (BCR). For example, how would the assumed requirement for crews and trains change if, each hour, a terminating TransPennine Middlesbrough train then worked to Newcastle and formed the next TransPennine Newcastle starter? We believe that the final RUS should clearly signal the railway's intention to become a major player on this corridor.

- **Option 6.4 – Improved Tees-Tyne link (via the Durham coast)**

We believe it is important that the final RUS leaves the door open for further consideration of how the gaps this option is intended to meet might be addressed.

- **Option 6.5 – New stations on the Durham coast**

The RPA referred to four possible new stations (Hart Village, Peterlee, Easington and Ryhope) on the Durham Coast. We note that the draft RUS recommends that none

are progressed on the grounds of poor value for money, although it is unclear what methodology has been used and no Benefit to Cost Ratio has been calculated. We find the draft RUS conclusions particularly surprising in the case of Peterlee, population 23,120 (where a station would also serve Horden) and therefore larger than Seaham which has an hourly service at present. The draft RUS states that “the stations would generate low levels of patronage”, but the following should be noted in respect of the off-peak:

- Arriva and Go Ahead run 30 minute frequencies from Peterlee to Hartlepool (i.e. four buses per hour)
- Go Ahead run twice each hour from Peterlee to Middlesbrough
- Arriva and Go Ahead respectively run five and three buses each hour from Peterlee to Sunderland (i.e. eight buses per hour)
- Go Ahead run one bus each hour from Peterlee to Newcastle

There is clearly a strong public transport market from Peterlee to the key conurbations that would be served by direct trains were a station to be provided in the town. Passenger Focus therefore urges a review of the recommendation that this option is not progressed, at least in respect of Peterlee.

- **Option 6.6 – Reduction in Tees Valley journey times**
Please see Paragraph 2.2.5, above.
- **Option 6.7 – Bishop Auckland-Darlington-Saltburn services**
We support the recommendation that there is no merit in ‘splitting’ this route at Darlington. It is surprising, however, that the draft RUS does not consider the case for frequency enhancement on the Bishop Auckland line, the only route in the RUS area with less than an hourly frequency (with the exception of the Whitby line). Passenger Focus recommends that the final RUS considers the costs and benefits of improving the current relatively poor service, 07.21 is very late for a first train, there a number of two-hour gaps and 20.30 from Darlington (19.55 from Middlesbrough) is very early for the last train.
- **Option 6.8 – Increasing capacity into Middlesbrough**
Please see Paragraph 3.2, above.
- **Gap 7: Tyneside local services**
 - **Option 7.1 – Increasing peak capacity into Newcastle**
Please see Paragraph 3.2, above.
 - **Option 7.2 – Reduction in Tyne Valley journey times**
Please see Paragraph 2.2.5, above.

- **Gap 8: diversionary routes**

Improving diversionary route capability will benefit passengers in two ways:

- a. reduced use of road transport 'around' a planned engineering blockade. Findings in 'Passengers' attitudes to engineering works' (Rail Passengers Council, 2003) showed that passengers strongly prefer to make their whole journey by train – even if they are diverted or have to change trains – than travel on a bus. Just over half of passengers said they would prefer a diverted train that took longer than have to get on a bus: 30 minutes to one hour additional journey time was regarded as acceptable.
- b. continuation of a service in the event of unplanned non-availability of parts of the network. The industry must work hard to reduce the number of 'one off' incidents, but overhead line electrification will fail and there will be suicides, track defects, weather-related incidents etc. Being able to offer a service to passengers – in particular those trying to get to or from work and those already *en route* – is one element of delivering a credible, value for money product. This is particularly important at peak times, not least because of the practical difficulty obtaining sufficient numbers of buses, sufficiently quickly, to keep passengers on the move.

There is merit in considering all the listed diversionary options. We have the following points:

- **Generic point – crew route knowledge**

Considering what infrastructure enhancements would enhance the capability of particular routes for diversionary use is helpful. However, many of these routes could be used at present, subject to crew route knowledge (e.g. Hull Trains use of the Peterborough-Ely-Cambridge-Hitchin route). Whether during planned or unplanned disruption, running a Peterborough to London diesel shuttle via Ely and Cambridge would be preferable to passengers than travelling by bus or being stranded. The diversion of diesel services during unplanned disruptions would limit the delay for some passengers, reduce the demand for buses and ease the sheer number to be 'managed' from train to bus and back to train. There is clearly a cost to maintaining route knowledge over irregularly-used routes, but what is the cost of not doing so?

- **Option 8.1 – Diversionary route: Alexandra Palace-Hertford North-Stevenage**

Enhancing the capability and capacity of the Hertford loop to provide a diversionary route at times when the ECML via Welwyn Garden City is not available would contribute significantly to getting passengers to their destinations in the event of unplanned disruption. It would also allow train operators to run a timetable that satisfies demand in the case of planned disruption: this is not possible at present. Our comments, above, in relation to Option 1.4 and effective planning of Sunday services during diversions are relevant here. The final RUS should recommend that this option is progressed.

- **Option 8.2 – Diversionary route: Hitchin-Cambridge-Ely-Peterborough**

Creating a robust alternative route for ECML trains in the event of planned or unplanned disruption between Peterborough and Hitchin is important. The final RUS

must signal an end to the scenario that commuters from Newark, Grantham and Peterborough cannot get to work because of overhead line problems at, for example, Huntingdon. Although Hitchin-Cambridge-Ely-Peterborough has a significant role to play as a diesel only diversionary route, the RUS should properly examine the case for 'in fill' electrification between Ely and Peterborough.

- **Option 8.6 – Diversionary route: Doncaster-Micklefield-Leeds**

The recent flooding on the Doncaster-Wakefield Westgate-Leeds route illustrated the vulnerability of the London to Leeds service to disruption. The final RUS must recommend that this route is upgraded a. to ensure that this key market can be served even when the Wakefield line is not available and b. to facilitate the eventual provision of three trains per hour between Leeds and London. The economic benefit to 'UK railway PLC' of more efficient Long Distance High Speed rolling stock utilisation through implementing the 'horseshoe' should not be overlooked.

- **Gap 10: station capacity**

Although we appreciate that the proposed Chesterton station would be located just outside the area covered by the ECML RUS, we wish to reiterate a point made in Passenger Focus' response to the Greater Anglia RUS draft for consultation.

"The location of Cambridge station in relation to the large employment sites adjacent to the A14 Cambridge northern by-pass, as well as the hinterland between Cambridge and Huntingdon, is hampering rail's ability to serve these growing markets. All too easily potential revenue is lost to the M11. We believe that the final RUS should recommend that an access to the network strategy covering the Greater Cambridge area is undertaken immediately, examining the case for Chesterton in the context of how passengers will access the railway in the area as a whole. It is vital that this is considered alongside this RUS's recommendations about the West Anglia route, the measures in the First Capital Connect Great Northern capacity study and the East Coast Main Line RUS as it relates to the Kings Cross-Cambridge route."

Please also see our comments about Greater Cambridge in section five, above, in relation to Option 2.3.

6. Contact details

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