

Prototype Timetable Development Remit - West Coast Main Line – Phase Two

Summary

As part of the initial West Coast Trains re-franchising process, in May 2010, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) wrote to industry Stakeholders seeking to identify any future new and/or amendments to track access rights on West Coast Main Line (WCML) post April 2012. In response, the ORR received a number of expressions of interest (aspirations).

In order to inform its decision regarding any access rights ORR instructed Network Rail to conduct a two phased approach that assessed current network capacity and determined the optimal utilisation of remaining network availability along the WCML corridor¹. Phase one concluded that there were three potential scenarios, all with differing criteria, outputs and changes in existing operations; these were:

Scenario One: 1 x 125mph 'off peak' train path per hour between London Euston and Preston

Scenario Two: 2 x 125mph 'off peak' train path per hour between London Euston and Preston

Scenario Three: 1 x 110mph 'off peak' train path per hour between London Euston and Preston

On reviewing the three scenarios above, the ORR has concluded that for the purpose of this exercise, Scenario One appears to offer the best whole industry solution. ORR was concerned that Scenario Two would effectively fill the off-peak timetable which was considered to be unsustainable from a performance point of view. Similarly, Scenario Three would have significant impacts upon the operation of services, including journey times and calling patterns, leading to the creation of a non-mirror image timetable.

The ORR therefore instructed Network Rail to undertake the development of a prototype West Coast Main Line timetable for Scenario 1. The expected output shall be the establishment of the criteria for one additional timetable path per hour for Scenario One to the specified outlined in section 1.

¹ See ORR's website at <http://www.rail-reg.gov.uk/server/show/nav.2437> for further information.

Section 1 - Timetable Specification

Using the December 2010 timetable as the base (including changes proposed under Eureka East Coast Timetabling project) construct a prototype timetable to the following specification:

- One SX 'off peak' hourly departure from Euston at xx:33 (with equivalent return workings) to as far as Preston;
- Timed as Timing Load 221T.
- Operational hours from Euston between and including 07:33 to 15:33. Return workings to arrive in London approximately hourly commencing after the height of the morning peak.
- Calling Pattern as follows - Milton Keynes Central, Rugby, Nuneaton, Crewe (Crewe calls may be omitted if appropriate).
- Off route options should also be considered during development:
 - Extension to Lancaster, calling at Warrington Bank Quay, Wigan North Western and Preston.
 - Extension from Preston to Blackpool.
 - Extension from Newton Le Willows to Bradford Interchange via Manchester Victoria (onward calling pattern to be confirmed through 1:1 stakeholder meeting).
 - Extension from Crewe to Leeds via Heaton Norris (onward calling pattern to be confirmed through 1:1 stakeholder meeting).
 - Extension from Wigan North Western to Blackburn.
 - The existing 1333 FO departure to Lancaster should be amended to match the above pattern, along with equivalent southbound services.
- Extensions of xx:30 Euston – Lancaster services to and from Glasgow, and equivalent Lancaster – Euston services to start from Glasgow, excluding the potential 1940 ex-Glasgow Central.
 - Existing calling pattern to be retained (Warrington Bank Quay, Wigan North Western, Preston, Lancaster, Oxenholme Lake District or Penrith, Carlisle).
 - Consideration should be given to unit balancing
- 4tph on DC lines.
 - Assuming suitable re-cast of Bakerloo Line timetable.
- A commentary is to be given on the feasibility of including additional Lockerbie and/or Motherwell calls on West Coast Main Line (London, Birmingham or Manchester) services in the timetable.

Freight Services

- Existing Freight services to be retained and, if necessary, retimed within current agreed track access rights.
- Additional increase in freight services in line with Strategic Freight Network growth forecasts for 2019.

Section 3 - Specification Post-North West Electrification

It should be noted that, in all this, there may be a completely different timetable in the north-west, given that electrification is likely to produce different point-to-point times, and that different origin and destination pairs, routings and stopping patterns are likely to result. On that basis, ORR believes that it would be better to put off this element of the work until such time as a basis exists to review the whole timetable north of Crewe.

Section 4 - Not being taken forward

The following are not specifically to be developed further in the prototype timetable:

- Any aspirations that require uncommitted infrastructure enhancements;
- 110mph paths on the Fast Lines between Euston and Crewe for the reasons given above;
- Additional 125mph Fast Line paths to/from Euston beyond that described above;
 - i.e. only one additional path per hour to be included in the off-peak only.
- Any additional Slow Line paths between Euston, Northampton and Rugby other than those required to meet freight growth forecasts because of the trade offs required, particularly the significant impact on freight services;
- Any removal of Fast Line calls at Watford Junction because of the detrimental effect on what is already considered to be a poorly served station;
- Any prioritisation of a reduction in journey times for CrossCountry services compared to December 2010;
- Any increase to the frequency of services between South Croydon, East Croydon, Clapham Junction, Shepherd's Bush, Watford Junction, Tring and Milton Keynes Central compared to December 2010 because of occupation of the SLs and potential impact on freight;
- Any additional Manchester – Scotland services compared to December 2010 again because there is no specification for what these might be and because of the potential impact upon freight.

Section 5 - Definitions

Off Peak - Between the hours of 07:33 and 15:33 Mondays to Fridays

SX - Mondays to Friday operation

Aspirant - Stakeholder that has expressed an interest, in response to the ORR letter dated 14th May 2010, to propose a new or amendment(s) to future track access rights along or impact or the WCML.