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16 June 2023

Dear Emyl,

First Trenitalia West Coast Rail Limited (FTWCRL) response to Network Rail's Updated Representations to Avanti West Coast's (AWC) 2nd and 3rd Supplemental Agreements

Thank you for your continued constructive engagement with us and Network Rail (NR) regarding the FTWCRL 2nd and 3rd Supplemental Agreements (SAs), for additional Liverpool services, and reinstatement of services to Glasgow Central/Blackpool respectively.

It is useful to review NR's updated representations regarding the impact of the deferral of the HS2 Euston Platform Out of Use Plan. Through our close engagement with the HS2 On Network Works team, we understand this sees a delay to the temporary two-year removal of Platform 16 to at least May 2024, which is expected to also impact on the timescales for taking Platform 15 Out of Use.

We are however concerned that NR has not made clear how this affects its position on our 2nd and 3rd SAs, which impacts the information available to ORR for timely decision making.

As set out in our letter to ORR of 5th April 2023, further to our response to NR's representations of 6th January, we have concerns regarding NR's position on Euston Platform Capacity. We do not believe NR have reasonable grounds to require 16 platforms to be available before AWC can introduce additional London Euston to Liverpool services under the 2nd SA. We outlined how, based on the platform occupancy built into the December 2022 timetable, introducing the additional London Euston to Liverpool services when 15 platforms are available should not present increased risk to performance over the 14 platform timetable with no additional services. There is also adequate capacity for the Blackpool services within the 3rd SA in this scenario.

Alongside this, we set out concerns regarding the application of traction power supply modelling as another factor in determining the level of available access rights. On 7th June, NR and AWC Subject Matter Experts met to discuss further the status of ongoing power supply modelling and next steps. A key next step from this meeting was for NR to share paths/scenarios that cause concern, reflecting how the modelling has shown that the timings of voltage exceedance in the Crewe-Weaver area are not uniform through the day. We continue our dialogue with NR on this area, including scope to develop operational mitigations as required, as has been applied elsewhere.

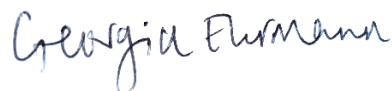
Recognising the interplay between these factors in NR's review of performance and capacity, it is important we understand how each has informed NR's position in light of the delay to the HS2 Euston works.

Ahead of the delivery of HS2, developing the service offer on the core WCML is essential to the growth of UK rail and associated socio-economic benefits. Recognising the challenges posed by the review of design, deliverability and cost of the HS2 works at Euston station, it is important the overall programme impact and timescales are factored into decision making by ORR and funders. This must be taken into account, to ensure conventional WCML capability and capacity meets the requirements to robustly support further demand growth and build cases for targeted investment.

Timely and evidence-based decision making is key for us to together plan our additional services, notably to Liverpool, and associated customer connectivity improvements. These services, committed to as part of our Train Service Requirement 3 with DfT, will also enable return on investment in rolling stock and infrastructure on the WCML.

In this context, we are keen to work with ORR and NR to reach a clear and agreed position to enable a decision to be made on these applications.

Please get in touch if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Georgia Ehrmann". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Georgia Ehrmann
Head of Network Development & Planning
Avanti West Coast