

Office of Rail Regulation Draft Determination for the Periodic Review (PR13)



The Public Transport Consortium (PTC) is a special interest group of the Local Government Association, representing the interests of shire counties and unitary authorities in England and Wales.

The Consortium aims to:

- act as a forum for discussion and promotion of public transport issues affecting local authorities outside metropolitan areas;
- promote the exchange of experience and good practice between member authorities and in liaison with other bodies;
- advise appropriate committees or other executive bodies of the LGA on public transport issues; and
- represent interests of member authorities to Government, the Local Government Association, operators and other organisations involved in public transport

Membership includes approximately 30 authorities.

A response was submitted to the Network Rail Strategic Business Plan which is attached for your information.

In the Office of Rail Regulation draft determination, recognition is made of the growth in rail use by both passengers and freight, and it is acknowledged that this growth has put pressure on the network to the point where in places it is at capacity, with more growth forecast over the next five year period. Network Rail recognises this and seeks to deliver a substantial programme of investments, so that passenger and freight user's satisfaction and train punctuality are, as a minimum, maintained and should increase.

However, Network Rail must continue to improve its effectiveness, increase efficiency and performance further in the next control period; whilst it must be acknowledged that investment is needed to increase capacity, it is important to recognise that historically there has been underinvestment over a long period. Network Rail must deliver the right projects having established the outcome each will deliver, providing the best value for users and taxpayers. Long term, sustainable improvements should be sought with improved asset management to reduce costs and avoid above inflation fare increases.

Working in partnership with the Local Government Association as a Special Interest Group



The rail network is essential to all our members – delivering economic growth, reducing congestion and improving the quality of life for those who work, reside in or visit the area. Many local authorities wish to see rail use grow and services expand, thus work that delivers small improvements in journey time, extra capacity and punctuality are as important as major programmes. Whilst the objective of Network Rail is to increase the number of trains that arrive on time during Control Period 5, it is important that specific attention is paid to areas with the worst performing services, to benefit customers where reliability is less than average. It is equally important to reduce the disruption caused by engineering works, especially to minimise rail replacement services by road. Efforts must also be made to reduce cancelled and very late trains. Freight train reliability must continually increase for this to be seen as an attractive alternative to road, with upgrades to recognise future container traffic.

A number of authorities have, and wish to continue developing, rail services, some of which have subsequently been incorporated into franchises. Access charges for new services are a critical factor in determining viability, and guidance from the Office of Rail Regulation to Network Rail would be helpful to encourage development of the rail network. The determination on access charges for passenger operators is reasonable. It is important that freight access charges are such that current freight movements are retained, and in the medium to long term, increases in freight movements are encouraged. More detailed financial information being available on the cost of operating the railway would assist our members to understand the potential the rail network can deliver. The proposals to increase monitoring and reporting are welcomed, and performance data for each route would be valuable.

John Pope, Policy Advisor
(August 2013)