

GNER Edinburgh – Metro response

From: James Nutter

To: Rachel Gilliland

Cc: Jonathan Cooper

Dear Rachel,

I write regarding the above mentioned proposal, and make the following points:

- Whilst this proposal does not directly impact upon West Yorkshire, it could indirectly impact on other current and prospective services utilising the East Coast Main Line to/from West Yorkshire and the wider Leeds City Region, which would be of concern to Metro.
- Metro has been developing evidence in support of an enhancement to Long Distance High Speed (LDHS) services serving West Yorkshire from London. In particular, we are aware of the Department for Transport sponsored remit to improve journey times and connectivity between Leeds and London via the East Coast Main Line Connectivity Fund. Included in this remit is the ability for the ECML infrastructure to allow an increase in LDHS service frequency between London and Leeds to 3 trains an hour. Metro's evidence suggests that there is a good case to extend one of these three trains per hour to Bradford, and possibly Halifax, which would strongly underpin the economies of these centres. I am also aware of the strong market potential to better serve Harrogate with LDHS services.
- Whilst Metro is agnostic as to whether the above-mentioned enhancement to West Yorkshire LDHS services are operated by franchised or open access operators, we do believe that given the current franchise competition for the Inter-City East Coast (ICEC) Franchise, it would be wrong to allocate paths now to the Alliance Rail GNER Edinburgh to London services, without a more rounded evaluation of the ICEC franchisee service proposals as part of the franchise competition.
- If it can be shown that the Alliance Rail GNER Edinburgh to London services proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the prospect of introducing the aforementioned enhancements to West Yorkshire LDHS services, then Metro would not have any concern.
- A further point that I feel must be made, is that of the affordability challenge that the UK railway is having to deal with, and how the Alliance Rail proposal can help meet this challenge. If the evidence suggests that the Alliance Rail proposal will help grow the railway rather than abstract revenue from it, then that can only be a positive thing as it could lead to greater track access revenue and so reduce the overall cost to the public purse of running the railway. If on the other hand the evidence suggests the proposal is simply abstractive, then this would be a negative thing as it would no doubt reduce profits for the ICEC franchise operator, and in turn reduce the revenue flowing

to the Department for Transport. At this present time, the Department for Transport's budget to support rail services is coming under scrutiny as part of the Government's efforts to reduce the national debt. Metro, as part of the Rail North consortium, is working towards taking on a greater role in the specification and management of the local/inter-urban rail franchises, including taking on a level of financial risk. As these franchised services receive relatively high levels of public subsidy, any proposals from other operators that could impact negatively on the total Government budget for rail service support, could mean there is less money to support inter-urban/local services in the scope of Rail North, and impact on Metro's future position in relation to financial risk, which would be of concern to Metro.

I appreciate that these comments appear negative, however I would add that Metro generally does not have any objection in principle to the Alliance Rail proposal. I would however like to be assured that the points raised above have been/will be considered, and would be happy to discuss these points further with colleagues at Alliance Rail at an appropriate time.

Best wishes

James Nutter
Rail Manager
Metro
Wellington House
40-50 Wellington Street
Leeds. LS1 2DE.