

Consultation on Network Rail's Output Framework for 2014-19

Q1. Do you agree with our proposals for outputs and indicators for passenger train service performance? Should we retain the sector level outputs for PPM and CaSL (for England & Wales)? Is there more we need to do to ensure consistency with franchise obligations?

The need for the industry to provide relevant, understandable and meaningful passenger train performance indicators is important to ensure the trust and support of rail passengers. Passengers require information that is relevant to them and the journeys they make. The use of PPM and CaSL are probably the best ways to impart performance information. However the aim should be to get the performance information as close to the journeys being made by passengers rather than through grouped information. Furthermore the assessment of the performance of a journey should be measured at a number of points on route rather than at the destination station. Too often there is additional time built into a timetable prior to the final station which then suggests performance has been better than it actually has been for most of the journey.

Q2. Do you agree with our proposals for an output and indicators for freight train service performance?

While performance is important for freight the position is not as sensitive. A 15 minute delay is much less of an issue. However there is the potential for late freight journeys to have knock on impacts on passenger journeys. The proposed process appears reasonable.

Q3. Do you agree that outputs for Network Rail in relation to named projects, capacity metrics and funds should be project-specific milestones defined in the enhancements delivery plan? Do you have any comments on how useful the enhancements delivery plan has been in CP4? What are your views on indicators to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of the funds?

Network Rail performance in delivering named projects should be assessed. Merseytravel has worked closely with Network Rail in the delivery of improvements to the Underground stations on Merseyside. While these weren't named projects they are of significant value. Merseytravel is happy with Network Rail's performance and the consultation processes. We would be interested in the development of indicators to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of funds.

Q4. We propose to define delivery plan milestones to ensure Network Rail delivers a plan to reduce risk at level crossings, and to use certain indicators to monitor Network Rail's delivery of these outputs and its wider legal obligations. Do you agree with this approach?

The importance of safety cannot be overstated and any plans to reduce the risk of incidents at level crossings are supported.

Q5. Do you have a proposal for an alternative to the existing network availability (for reducing disruption from engineering works) outputs, which could be viably implemented in time for the start of CP5? If the existing outputs are retained do you have any proposals to improve them?

Ensuring the maximum availability of the network is important and to continue to use the current measures would provide a degree of consistency. However it is important that Network Rail is set challenging targets with a requirement to increase the availability of the network to the passenger and freight operators. There should also be a limit on how long a particular line is out of action.

Q6. Should we introduce a measure of the efficiency of the use of possessions, and if so how could this be defined?

Clearly there have been occasions when the use of possessions has not been as efficient as it could be and in such cases TOC's will have no doubt raised the problem with Network Rail directly. One of the problems with current possessions is the length of time taken from the start of the possession until work can be undertaken. If the handover period together with a reduced handover period at the end of the possession then more work could be undertaken within the possession period and fewer possessions required.

Q7. Do you agree that we should retain the CP4 network capability output? Do you have a view on the usefulness of the indicators suggested, or any further suggestions for improvement?

It is difficult to understand why the capability of the network would be increased if this improvement is not then translated into a tangible benefit as referred to in the consultation document (re: Arup review). While it is appreciated that alternative rolling stock might be required to fully realise the benefits if a line is improved to allow faster journey times both the train operators and Network Rail should be required to implement the improvement within a given time period.

Q8. We want to improve the definition of the existing station condition output (SSM – station stewardship measure) and introduce a new measure – SSM+ – which provides a clearer disaggregation for measuring condition and better, value based, weights. Do you agree with this new approach?

Merseytravel believes that maintain the condition of stations to a high standard is important and as a PTE has had involvement in assessing condition of facilities at stations in a number of franchises. It is important that whatever the system is in place is relevant and does actually provide a realistic assessment of a station and how passengers might perceive it. Clearly if the current system assessment is being distorted due to lack of standardisation or unbalanced weighting then this does need to be addressed and would support the proposed change in methodology.

Q9. Do you agree that we retain the current CP4 measure of depot condition but treat this as an indicator rather than an output?

Merseytravel has no specific view on this measure and is content with the proposal.

Q10. Do you agree with the proposed new approach to strengthen the focus on further asset management improvements? Do you have any specific comments on the detailed measures?

Merseytravel would agree with any focus that ensures that station assets are maintained to a high standard. While there is a proposal for future franchises to see greater involvement of the train operator in the maintenance of assets prior to this being implemented it is important that Network Rail continue to deliver this task. Train operators are dependent on Network Rail providing the base facilities from which they then work from. Many Train Operators have service quality regimes which measure the customer facing facilities. There are occasions when there is delay to the repair of a specific facility as it falls within Network Rail's remit and any delay by Network Rail to repair it has a direct knock-on effect on passengers.

While it is difficult to suggest, without all the necessary information, how the detailed measures should be prioritised it is suggested that anything which affects customer facing facilities should be more heavily weighted in any assessment mechanism.

Q11. Which, if any, of the asset management measures do you think should be regulatory obligations (equivalent to outputs), and which should be enablers/indicators?

No specific comments.

Q12. Recognising that certain indicators are needed to monitor HLOS delivery, and that Network Rail is in the process of deciding on further indicators, do you have views on specific environmental indicators which we should monitor?

Network Rail should have in place a Sustainability Strategy which identifies specific realistic targets to be achieved. Merseytravel supports a continuous reduction in carbon dioxide emissions per train km and freight tonne km and the supports the requirement of the DfT HLOS to set targets across a range of measures.

Q13. Should we introduce a new indicator of changes in journey times? Do you have views on how this measure should be calculated? Should we also introduce a measure of accessibility to stations?

It is not clear what a new indicator of changes to journey times would be helpful. Train operators will tend to highlight and market trains which provide faster journey opportunities. Saving odd minutes on a journey will not necessarily demonstrate anything for most journeys. Concern has been raised that journey times could be reduced by skipping stations.

Merseytravel is keen to see all stations ultimately made accessible. An indicator would be helpful in that it would demonstrate the current level of accessibility and as funding from the Access for All fund helps to improve stations how this is increasing.

Q14. Should we introduce a new indicator designed to measure improvements in passenger information provision and how should this be measured?

Merseytravel believes provision of passenger information whether through real time information, posters or timetables is important, however real time information is helpful to passengers in that it provides confidence to passengers that the service is operating normally. If the aim is to provide real time information at all stations then this could be a useful indicator.

Q15. Should we also consider new indicators for example covering Network Rail's supply chain management and approach to innovation?

It is difficult to see how this could be developed and could be too subjective.

Q16. Do you have views on the introduction of a new measure of how Network Rail is developing its capability as a system operator, and what the measure should cover?

Network Rail is there to provide a network which allows train operators to deliver train services for use by the public. While an overall measure seems a good idea it is not clear what it would achieve. Network Rail should be measured across a number of areas which relate to making the network available, ensuring maximum use of the network and ensuring that trains are able to operate according to the timetable.

Q17. Should we have a mechanism to allow formal trade-offs to be made between high level outputs during the control period?

Network Rail should meet its obligations. If it cannot for a justifiable reason then the target in a specific area could be modified. Allowing trade-offs may lead to a more 'difficult' measure being consistently failed while 'easier' measures are delivered.

Q18. What do you think of the idea of a scorecard to provide context to our assessment of Network Rail's performance in CP5? Do you have views on our proposed scorecard, and do you have alternative suggestions?

This seems a reasonable proposal. However it would be useful this was developed at a disaggregated level so that train operators, PTE's and Local Authorities had a better understanding of Network Rail performance in their areas.