

## **GNER Cleethorpes + West Yorkshire services section 17 track access application – Passenger Focus response**

Thank you for sending Passenger Focus details of Alliance Rail's application for rights to run services on the ECML between London King's Cross, and Cleethorpes, Ilkley and Bradford Forster Square.

### ***GNER's proposals***

#### ***1. Cleethorpes***

- rights to operate four trains daily between London King's Cross and Cleethorpes;
- the service to Cleethorpes would start at the Principal Change Date in December 2017 (see note below);
- trains will call intermediately at Doncaster, Scunthorpe, Habrough and Grimsby Town.

#### ***2. Bradford/Ilkley***

- two-hourly between King's Cross and Bradford Forster Square, except that one each way would serve Ilkley instead;
- the service to Bradford Forster Square/Ilkley would start at the Principal Change Date in December 2018;
- their introduction is planned to coincide with the completion of electrification between Hambleton S. Junction and Neville Hill;
- trains will call intermediately at Doncaster, East Leeds Parkway<sup>1</sup>, Leeds, Kirkstall Forge<sup>2</sup> and Shipley or Guiseley;
- GNER will contribute to the costs of East Leeds Parkway station.

1. the date for its opening is still shown as "could be .... by 2013" on Metro's web site; it does not appear in the site's list of current projects.

2. planned to be open May 2015, according to Metro's web site (26/3/14).

#### ***3. Generic details***

- GNER is seeking "some" maximum journey time protection;
- the rolling stock will be capable of 125 mph, probably five-car Hitachi "Super Express Trains" (see note below);
- the depot will probably be in the Doncaster area (section 3.1), or definitely there (section 4.1);
- the service is designed to provide through journeys to London from places with a limited, or no, such service at present, and to compete with the franchised East Coast operator;
- a maximum of two trains each way will detach/attach at Doncaster;
- GNER will work with Network Rail to develop plans for use during service disruption;
- ECML timetable recasts are planned for December 2016 and December 2018, a recast is necessary to make use of the

additional capacity created on the ECML by CP4 enhancement schemes;

- GNER notes capacity schemes in CP5 will add further capacity, which it believes will be sufficient to accommodate the trains in its application;
- at present, Network Rail is unable to quantify available capacity in December 2017, and so does not agree that there will be capacity for the services;
- a “re-opener” clause has been included;
- rights would cover the period December 2017 to the PCD in December 2032.

**Note:** Hitachi Rail Europe’s “Super Express” (IEP) page on its web site quotes (on 26/3/14) December 2017 as the date scheduled for service introduction on the GWML. Passengers will need to be reassured that the plan in GNER’s statement (Form P, 4.5 Specified equipment) that the stock will be delivered before the proposed start date is achievable.

### ***The DfT’s ITT for the East Coast franchise***

The DfT issued its invitation to tender documentation for the InterCity East Coast franchise on 21/3/14; attachments A.2 and A.4 show Train Service Requirements 1 and 2. The number of paths required by the franchised East Coast operator will ramp up from Dec. 2018, rising from 75 departures (SX) from King’s Cross to 93 in the December 2020 timetable, increasing the number of paths per hour from five to six.

However, the minimum provision for Lincoln, Harrogate, Bradford Forster Square and Skipton remains at one train per day, and the number of trains for Leeds is unchanged at 33. Unless the new franchisee decides to increase the number of services, GNER’s proposals would be the only improvement for Leeds and Bradford. An improved service between Lincoln and London is a long-held aspiration of many, noted on page 18 of the InterCity East Coast Consultation Summary Report (DfT, Oct. 2013).

### ***What do Passengers want?***

Passenger Focus has a presumption in favour of competition because of the benefits it is likely to bring to passengers, provided those benefits do not come at the expense of existing passengers. The ORR has shown that competition has led to passengers benefiting from lower prices; competition by definition provides choice and is likely to increase all operators’ focus on customer service. Also, our own National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS) shows open access operators achieving high levels of overall passenger satisfaction.

As part of their work to find out what passengers want on the route, Passenger Focus has conducted extensive research with 1,604 passengers on East Coast’s North East & Scotland route, and has produced reports as part of their response to the franchising of long-distance ECML services. Although focussed on the franchise, there are aspects of the research

regarding the train service that are also applicable to services provided by Open Access operators. Two reports are:

*What passengers want from the East Coast rail franchise An initial submission from Passenger Focus May 2012*

*The InterCity East Coast franchise – A consultation response from Passenger Focus September 2012*

The evidence showed that “... *the specification should focus on journey opportunities. The key issue is whether passengers at each station have the required level of service to and from the places they want, or need, to travel at the times they wish to do so. The starting point should be the available opportunities provided by existing services and the aim should be to optimise these based on passenger demand.*”

Passengers' and stakeholders' aspirations for a more frequent service between Lincoln and London could be met by routing the proposed Grimsby and Cleethorpes services that way. Running via Doncaster, non-stop between there and London, adds less connectivity within Lincolnshire.

Passenger Focus is aware that pressure for faster inter-city journey times is growing: the TSR2 shows a ten-minute reduction in the average journey time between London and Leeds is required by December 2020.

### **Conclusion**

Passenger Focus is broadly in favour of the new rights being granted, subject to following.

'Network benefits' are important, and so competition must be delivered within a framework of co-ordination, which should ensure the **overall service** on routes meets passengers' needs to the **greatest possible extent**: there must be no significant disbenefit to any existing group of passengers. New proposals should not take precedence over the resolution of existing gaps in user needs.

It is important to plan a route in its entirety; the granting of new track access rights should not significantly frustrate the industry's subsequent ability to develop a timetable that maximises capacity, and utility to passengers.

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