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PR13 Programme Director  
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Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Date: 19 February 2013

Dear Mr Larkinson,

### **Response to the Network Rail Strategic Business Plan, 2014 - 2019**

I am writing in response to your letter of 8 January 2013 in which you asked for Suffolk County Council's views on Network Rail's strategic business plan for Control Period 5 (CP5) 2014 – 2019.

The Greater Anglia Rail Franchise is one of only 2 rail franchises in The United Kingdom that is a net contributor to the UK Exchequer. The area will also see significant growth in employment and housing in the next 10-20 years, particularly in the urban communities of Norwich, Ipswich, Colchester and Chelmsford along the Great Eastern Mainline (GEML). A faster, more reliable service between these towns, and one that might allow residents in them to access job opportunities within the central and east London economy, could add up to £2.8 billion of economic benefits for the area over a 60-year period.

This is why Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk County Councils all believe that the main priorities for Network Rail investment on the GEML over CP5 need to be faster overall journey times, more capacity, longer passing loops in both directions just north of Chelmsford Station (particularly around the Beaulieu Park area), and investment in track and Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) infrastructure between Chelmsford and Norwich.

Suffolk County Council's own research has shown that passengers need and expect faster journey times between the 4 above-mentioned towns and London Liverpool Street to be achieved incrementally over a defined time period, with a long-term target of being able to get from Norwich to London in 90 mins, from Ipswich in 60 mins, Colchester in 45 mins and Chelmsford in 25 mins. However, the council is also aware that the number of trains using the track south of Chelmsford has increased considerably in the last 10-15 years. As a result, any investment in track infrastructure earmarked with a view to improving journey times between East Anglia and London needs to take place north of Chelmsford.

The council needs Network Rail devise a plan for removing obstacles, in terms of track and Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) infrastructure, between Norwich and Chelmsford within CP5, just as it has agreed to do for the stretch of track south of Chelmsford and would be happy to work with Network Rail on this. A study recently commissioned by Suffolk, Norfolk, and Essex County Councils and supported by New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) concluded that this package for works would cost approximately £77 million over the CP5 period.

Forty percent of GEML passengers told Suffolk County Council they would like to see more seating capacity, particularly at peak times. It is estimated that there will be a shortfall of 5000 seats at peak times by 2031 if no action is taken to increase capacity. The remodelling of Bow Junction to use the capacity released by Crossrail would allow 28 trains per hour out of Liverpool Street Station at the busiest peak hour. The study mentioned in the paragraph above concluded that approximately 25% of the £2.5-2.8 billion of economic benefits mentioned above could be derived from uncrowded journey time savings and crowding relief for business passengers. Suffolk County Council believes that this represents excellent value for money for the £37.2 million Network Rail estimates it would cost them to remodel Bow Junction.

Many peak-time passengers who travel between Ipswich and London told the council that reliability and punctuality could be improved. Indeed, in the last 2 years, just 87% of trains on the Great Eastern Mainline have arrived at their destination within 10 minutes of their advertised time of arrival, 5% below Network Rail's own performance target. One reason for this is that much of the line between Shenfield and Chelmsford is double-tracked, with a high number of short loops. A tripled track or double-tracked section with longer passing loops just north of Chelmsford, and in the vicinity of the proposed Beaulieu Park Station, would allow Network Rail and/or the Train Operating Company to act quickly in the event of a train breaking down and would minimise delays. Either solution would also speed up journey times along the GEML by allowing faster intercity trains to overtake slower local ones. Research has shown that this program of works would cost approximately £133-193 million over the CP5 period. It would also help improve access and bring forward the development of 4000 homes and 40, 000m<sup>2</sup> of employment land near Beaulieu Park itself.

To conclude, research commissioned by the above 3 county councils has shown that these highly focused investment packages, which have a combined cost of £210-270 million, represent good value for money for up to £2.8 billion of economic benefits they will help create in East Anglia, £600 million of which could be realised in increased passenger fare revenue for the public purse.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this business plan. The council looks forward to working with Network Rail and the current and future train operating company (TOC) to tackle the issues mentioned above.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Guy McGregor  
Suffolk County Council Cabinet Member for Roads and Transport

CC: Mr David Higgins, Chief Executive, Network Rail  
The Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin MP, Secretary of State for Transport