

From: Russell.
Sent: 07 April 2015 5:05 PM
To: Reed, David; rebecca.stonehouse
Cc: Rachel Gilliland
Subject: Fw: East Coast Trains Limited's (ECTL) Section 17 application for rights to operate open access services on the ECML

Please see below the response we have received from Transport Focus - I understand that this has been sent to NR and ORR as well, but for completeness I have copied it below.

Kind Regards
Russell

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From: David Sidebottom <D>
To: "russell."
Date: 07/04/2015 16:58
Subject: East Coast Trains Limited's (ECTL) Section 17 application for rights to operate open access services on the ECML

Hello,

Thank you for sending Transport Focus details of East Coast Trains Limited's (ECTL) Section 17 application for rights to operate open access services on the ECML. They note that it proposes, from December 2018:

five return trains, spread throughout the day, every day of the week, between King's Cross and Edinburgh;
calls at Newcastle and Morpeth;
selected peak calls at Stevenage to cater for its northbound market;
journey times of between four and four and a half hours;
an earliest arrival at Edinburgh before 10.00;
using new-build 125 mph five-car multiple-units with performance comparable with Class 800/801 trains;
a "low fare" product.

Transport Focus also notes that:

quantum rights are sought, without journey time protection;
one up Sunday path would be only from Newcastle to King's Cross;
a sixth Saturday path is required from Edinburgh to Newcastle;
paths have been identified for services which are "consistent" with current operators on the ECML, and can be "accommodated alongside the aspirations ofVirgin Trains East Coast";
in December 2014 Network Rail published a report into the ECML's capability: *Group Strategy – Capability Analysis ECML 2020 Capacity – Timetable Assessment Report*;
infrastructure schemes underway or planned to be complete by December 2018 "provide sufficient capacity for the VTEC proposals andour proposed five return trains a day";
terms in respect of this application have not been agreed with Network Rail.

Passengers

The real test of these proposals will, of course, be how passengers react to them. Vital features for passengers using long-distance inter-city services are value for money, punctuality and reliability. The application states that, currently, half of journeys between London, Newcastle and Edinburgh are not made by rail, and that lower fares and better connectivity are two of the influences on the market size.

The proposed frequency, five per day, with the first down train leaving London before 6.00, is not frequent, particularly compared with Virgin Trains East Coast's current plans (see, for example, their track access application of 6/3/15) which include, from December 2016, two trains each hour between King's Cross and Edinburgh, one (4 hour, 22 minute journey time) with four, the other with seven or eight, stops. By May 2019 VTEC expect the faster train to average 4 hours 7 minutes, with two stops.

Two aspects of ECTL's proposals do provide unique benefits:

the plans to call at Stevenage fill a gap in VTEC's plans, which currently do not show any calls by Anglo-Scottish trains there;
the pre-10.00 arrival at Edinburgh.

Details of the proposed fares structure are, perforce, not provided, but it will have to be flexible, and offer value for money products that compete with other modes as well as create a niche in the railway market.