Amanda McDonald
Rail Regulatory Policy Advisor
Rail Strategy & Finance Team
Transport Scotland
Buchanan House
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22 June 2015

Dear Amanda,

RE: Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) Section 17 Application

Thank you for your emails dated 13th April and 24th April 2015. The purpose of this letter is to respond to your comments. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

Network Rail has made it clear in their recent letter on ECML capacity (dated 15 May 2015) that Transport Scotland's aspirations to serve two new stations at East Linton and Reston have not been factored into their capacity analysis. Clearly, the capacity choices on the section of line between Newcastle and Edinburgh need to be understood in much more detail and we would support further analysis in this regard.

However, what is clear from Network Rail's analysis, is that choices need to be made on the section of route between Edinburgh and Newcastle as there is insufficient capacity for all long distance high speed (LDHS) aspirations (as set out below) to be accommodated alongside two trains per hour (TPH) to Tweedbank services and 1 TPH Dunbar service.

Current ECML Applications for LDHS services to London:

VTEC:	2 TPH (Edinburgh <> London)
GNER (Alliance Rail):	1 TPH (Edinburgh <> London)
First Group:	0.5 TPH (Edinburgh <> London)
Total:	**3.5 TPH**

The latest analysis clearly concludes that for 2 TPH Tweedbank and an hourly Dunbar service to be accommodated, then only 2 TPH LDHS London services can be accommodated. (However, a third LDHS London service could be accommodated at the expense of 1TPH Tweedbank.)

We would welcome your views on these capacity choices and to better understand what Transport Scotland's preferred outcomes are, given the capacity constraints and the potential implication on Scottish – North East of England connectivity.

Yours sincerely

Phil Dawson
Regulation & Track Access Manager

cc   Mark Garner, Network Rail
        David Reed, ORR