

Essex County Council's response to the Office of the Rail Regulator's Periodic Review 2013: Draft Determination on the Network Rail Strategic Business Plan 2014-19.

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Essex County Council (ECC) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Office of the Rail Regulator's consultation on the Periodic Review 2013: Draft determination of Network Rail's outputs and funding for 2014-19. The response below is submitted on behalf of Essex County Council and has been prepared following discussions with the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning, County Council officers and other local stakeholders.

Essex County Council continues to fully support the work of local MPs and other partners across East Anglia to secure the much needed investment in our shared rail network identified in the East Anglian Rail Prospectus.

The Essex rail network is the gateway linking London to East Anglia and an efficient rail network is essential to help Essex businesses to be more productive, innovate and grow, and to attract investment and unlock sustainable growth opportunities. Our ambition is to make Essex the location of choice for business; for those already based in Essex and those who may choose Essex in the future.

We also believe that it is essential for the rail industry to respond to the growth in the popularity of rail travel and transportation to ensure that passengers and freight transporters continue to have the option of an affordable and flexible rail service that serves their day to day needs.

1 Planned Growth in Essex

Greater Essex (Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock) is home to more than 1.7m people, with 70,000 businesses providing 670,000 jobs. Essex benefits from its proximity to London and strong relationship with the capital. The future pattern of strategic growth up to 2031 will be mostly focused on the main urban centres, namely Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester and Harlow.

Basildon is home to the Basildon Enterprise Corridor, the largest concentration of employment in Essex currently providing 30,000 jobs. Basildon also has ambitious plans to re-develop the town centre including the railway station.

Chelmsford is England's newest city and is planning for the construction of 16,000 new homes and the creation of an estimated 20,000 new jobs by 2025. Many of these new homes and jobs will be located in the city centre, adjacent to the railway station, and within an urban extension to the north of Chelmsford, adjacent to the new Beaulieu Park Station.

Colchester will accommodate in excess of 19,000 new houses and 20,000 new jobs between by 2023 with significant development in the town centre and to the north of Colchester, both within easy reach of Colchester North railway station via a new multimodal transport corridor.

Harlow is a primary focus for growth in west Essex, with 16,000 new homes and 12,000 new jobs planned over the next 15 years. Harlow is ideally placed, being on the West Anglia mainline and with access to London and Stansted airport. Harlow is the location of Enterprise West Essex@Harlow, one of only two enterprise zones in the South East LEP area. This will accommodate up to 5,000 jobs, especially in the medical technology industries, advanced manufacturing and ICT sectors.

2 Passenger and freight growth

There has been a 34% growth in passengers on the Great Eastern mainline and 40% on the West Anglia mainline between 1995 and 2007, and a 26% growth between 2005 and 2011 on Essex Thameside services. Passenger numbers are close to all time record levels and these levels of growth are predicted to continue with up to 360,000 new homes planned across the four counties of Essex (including Thurrock and Southend unitary authorities), Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire.

The London and South East RUS predicts that peak hour (8am-9am) passengers on the Great Eastern main line heading to Liverpool Street are set to increase by 49% by 2031, from 16,500 to 24,600. During the same period, the number of passengers into Liverpool Street on the West Anglia main line will grow from 14,300 to 18,000.

In the longer term the London and South East Market Study predicts continued growth, for example of up to 75% on the Great Eastern mainline between 2011 and 2043.

Route	Service group	2011 total	Forecast passengers in 2043	Increase 2011 to 2043
London Liverpool Street	West Anglia	5,700	20,100 – 21,800	28% – 39%
	Great Eastern Main Line (GE)	19,500	29,600 – 34,100	52% – 75%
	GE Inners & Crossrail	13,600	22,700 – 24,900	67% – 83%
London Fenchurch Street	All services	16,300	20,200 – 23,800	24% – 46%

Long Term Planning Process: London and South East Market Study, Figure 6.6: London and South East peak hour passenger demand projections 2011 – 2043. (Background growth plus committed schemes in CP4 and CP5)

Forecasts of demand for port capacity to 2030 were published by the Department for Transport in 2006 and 2007 and suggest increases by 2030 over a 2005 base of 182% in containers, from 7m to 20m teu (twenty-foot equivalent units). Since then, the recession has led to a downturn in demand; however, the Government's view is that the long-term effect will be to delay but not ultimately reduce the eventual levels of demand for port capacity, in particular for unitised goods.

Since 2005, consents have been granted for a number of container port developments in and around Essex that will impact upon the demand for rail freight:

- The Port of Felixstowe currently handles 3.4million teu. Consent granted in February 2006 would provide capacity for an estimated further 1.6 to 2 million teu at Felixstowe South, the first phase of this development is now open (births 8 and 9);
- Bathside Bay (Harwich): consent granted March 2006 would provide capacity for an estimated 1.7 million teu per annum;
- London Gateway: consent granted June 2007 would allow capacity for an estimated 3.5 million teu per annum (currently under construction and due to open Q4 2013);

We note that the Freight Market Study forecasts show average annual growth to 2033 of 5.5 per cent for the ports and Channel Tunnel intermodal sector. A considerable proportion of this growth will need to be accommodated of rail lines in Essex where demand for passenger travel is also high and also predicted to grow rapidly.

3 Affordability

The Network Rail Strategic Business Plan is a welcome step forward in that it acknowledges the need for investment necessary to address growing demand for rail travel to, from and within Essex and includes some welcome plans for infrastructure improvement that will benefit Essex residents and businesses. ECC welcomes the Office of the Rail Regulator's broad acceptance of the affordability of the HLOS and Network Rail Strategic Business Plan.

ECC believes that it is important that the rail industry as a whole improves the efficiency and cost effectiveness of its service delivery and that these benefits are ultimately passed on to the passenger in the form of better value for money services.

4 Outputs

It is essential that appropriate infrastructure improvements are planned and delivered to enable rail travel to be a safe, reliable, attractive and affordable option for passengers and a cost effective solution for the transportation of freight.

Infrastructure enhancements must go hand in hand with service improvements delivered by Train Operating Companies through long term outcome focused franchise agreements.

Most rail franchises will be renewed during this Strategic Business Plan period providing an opportunity to redefine priorities and outcomes. The rail industry should seek to promote mode shift to rail travel from other forms of travel, especially from personal and business car use and for the long distance transportation of freight.

4.1 Infrastructure Provision

We particularly welcome the following proposals within the Network Rail Strategic Business Plan;

- the remodeling of Bow Junction to enable mainline trains to use capacity freed up by the construction of Crossrail;
- the construction of additional track capacity between Tottenham Hale and Stratford to increase capacity at the southern end of the West Anglia line;
- investment along the Felixstowe to Nuneaton route to reduce the need for freight trains to be routed via London;
- and the comprehensive programme of renewals.

We note that Network Rail, in its Strategic Business Plan, acknowledges that there will be a need for additional new railway infrastructure in the long-term. Longer term planning is fundamental to the efficient delivery of outputs in CP5 and beyond. Essex County Council

understands that Network Rail is about to commence a wide-ranging study into the future requirements of the Great Eastern Mainline; this is a welcome development and ECC would be happy to provide relevant data and assistance to Network Rail. ECC would like to see a long term commitment to develop plans for the provision of additional new railway infrastructure for implementation in CP5 and CP6 onwards.

- Additional capacity north of Chelmsford where the construction of additional track infrastructure and the new station at Beaulieu Park will enable more efficient pathing of trains between Colchester and Shenfield and relieve congestion at Chelmsford Station.
- Extension of the third track from Tottenham Hale to Brimsdown and on towards Broxbourne and in the longer term with the provision of 4-tracking to support the delivery of Crossrail 2 and the planned growth at Stansted Airport by the provision of a faster service to central London.

We also believe that it is also important that the railway does more than connect Essex to London. The railway is also an important link between the towns and cities in Essex and elsewhere in East Anglia; these are amongst the fastest growing locations in the UK and are well placed to drive the local and national economy.

We consider that an hourly train service is not credible if new passengers are to be attracted to the railway, something that Network Rail and train operators should be required to encourage. All train stations in Essex should ultimately have a half-hourly train service throughout the working week including Saturdays. Half-hourly train services can be accommodated on some lines without expenditure on infrastructure or rolling stock while other services will require infrastructure investment. Network Rail should work with the TOCs, Essex County Council and local districts to identify and deliver an incremental programme of improved services on secondary lines; for example, adding a new loop on the Braintree Branch line to double service frequency to half-hourly, and improved services on the Clacton / Walton, Harwich, Southminster and Chafford Hundred branches.

4.2 Line Speed Enhancement

Improved punctuality is an essential performance measure for the rail industry; however, ECC does not wish to see this delivered through increased journey times. Punctuality targets should be challenging, line specific and include intermediate stations, and should go hand in hand with reduced journey times and improved service frequency and provision.

Essex County Council welcomes the specific allocation of funds to the Journey time improvement fund.

If Essex is to benefit fully from its location adjacent to London it is essential that journey times to London remain competitive. Essex would like to see a commitment to the delivery of

incremental line speed improvements and faster trains to deliver a significant real improvement to journey times on all lines serving Essex (West Anglia, Great Eastern and Essex Thameside services);

- Raising line speeds between London Liverpool Street and Norwich to a maximum of 110 mph;
- Increase West Anglia mainline speed to at least 100mph to cut journey times as a first step towards Stansted Airport's ambition for a 30min journey time between London and the airport.
- Increase Essex Thameside line speed to 100mph.

4.3 Rolling stock

It is important that performance frameworks for both Network Rail and Train Operating Companies are built around passenger requirements, and that investment in infrastructure and rolling stock are co-ordinated to deliver greatest value. Rolling stock requirements have been identified in the East Anglian rail Prospectus.

The rail routes in Essex are among the most profitable on the entire rail system, yet we have some of the poorest quality trains with no promise of any improvement in the foreseeable future. New or significantly refurbished trains offering a significantly improved passenger experience are needed for both Intercity and commuter services as part of the new franchises.

It is essential that a start is made to the upgrade and / or replacement of the current Great Eastern outer suburban electric multiple units to ensure that these meet passenger requirements. Improvements should include 110mph running, improved acceleration, air conditioning, power sockets and Wi-Fi for all passengers, corridor connections between units, better comfort and improved seating suitable for longer journeys. Similar improvements are required on the West Anglia line where all services should offer a passenger experience equivalent to the new Stansted Express service.

New high quality DDA compliant InterCity style stock is urgently required on the Great Eastern Mainline. In the shorter term and until replacement stock becomes available it is essential that the current Mk3 coaches undergo a full overhaul and refurbishment.

Additional high quality trains will be needed via the new franchise for Essex Thameside services to make effective use of recently completed track and station improvements constructed to meet growing passenger demand.

4.4 Stations

Stations play a key role as the interface between rail and other forms of travel.

All stations need to offer an attractive environment that welcomes passengers. Stations should be accessible to all passengers with clear train information provided. We welcome the provision of specific funds for station improvements and would wish to work with Network Rail and the TOCs to deliver an improved passenger experience.

4.5 Freight

Investment in rail freight is essential to handle increased demand, to encourage increased rail modal share and to ensure that east coast ports are not placed at a competitive disadvantage to those connected to the “electrified spine”.

- ECC supports a continued commitment to continued investment along the Felixstowe to Nuneaton route, reducing the need for freight trains to be routed via London. This also has the potential to transfer freight from congested roads including the A12. Current demand for freight trains to the Haven Ports is expected to double to more than 50 each way each day.
- ECC welcomes the announcement in the recent Spending Review to electrify the Barking to Gospel Oak line. This will enable up to 50 freight trains per day from the Thames ports to avoid conflicts with the Great Eastern mainline while also meeting passenger demand on this important London orbital route.

4.6 Longer term investment

Crossrail 2 has the potential to provide much economic benefit to our communities in the west of Essex supporting our ambitious growth and regeneration plans for Harlow and providing vital support to the increasingly ambitious Stansted airport. Essex County Council, therefore, strongly supports the Crossrail 2 Regional Option.

In support of this stance, we believe that Crossrail 2 should be developed within a wider framework that also delivers faster and more frequent services from west Essex and Stansted Airport to London alongside a frequent service for north London. We therefore believe that Crossrail 2 is entirely dependent upon the delivery of the Lea Valley 4-track proposal between Coppermill Junction and Broxbourne and that Network Rail and Transport for London must continue to work together on this project.

While we believe that it is essential that the construction of High Speed 2 does not detract from other rail investment Essex County Council believes that the Government should build upon the existing High Speed line by ensuring that the addition of HS2 results in a true

National High Speed Rail Network serving the needs of domestic as well as international passengers.

At present, services on HS1 are relatively inaccessible for those outside London. Providing direct access to the wider European rail network by linking HS1 and HS2 to create a national high speed rail network could address this, especially if this is combined with improved interchange between conventional and high speed services, for example at Stratford. We are, however, concerned that in focussing on international travel only the Government is missing many of the potential benefits associated with linking HS1 and HS2. There is significant potential to develop high speed services between the South East, the Midlands, North West and Yorkshire and Humber area, connecting the huge and internationally competitive markets of London and the South East to the Midland and North. For these benefits to be maximised it is essential for HS1 and HS2 to function as a single National high speed network serving both domestic and international demand.

This current HS1-HS2 link proposal has limited capacity for high speed trains and would have a serious impact on North London Line services, It is essential that plans for an enhanced HS1-HS2 link line are progressed now if the significant benefits that could accrue to rail users and the wider economy are to be realised.

5 Integration with the Wider Transport Network

As a local transport authority Essex County Council has wide responsibilities for transport provision across Essex and we welcome opportunities to work with the rail industry to further integrate rail with other forms of transport. When considering outcomes being sought it is important that the rail industry considers the complete journey as the decision whether or not to travel by train is not solely dependent upon times, frequencies and fares. Other factors such as access to stations, the overall quality of the service, and the cost, availability and convenience of alternatives are equally important. The rail industry should demonstrate a commitment to Station Travel Plans, Community Rail Partnerships, the effective integration of bus and rail including smart ticketing, and station improvement programmes.

In view of the importance of the rail network to local authorities, increased collaborative working with Network Rail and train operating companies during CP5 is vital. There are many areas of common intent, such as “smart” and flexible ticketing, improved access to stations and a reduction in level crossings leading to the delivery of an integrated transport network.

Essex County Council is keen to ensure the right balance is delivered between performance, capacity and cost, and that the rail network is able to attract inward investment and deliver increased competitiveness with the needs of passengers and the freight sector at the heart of outcomes sought by the rail industry.