



ASLEF's Response to The ORR Consultation on Aligning Incentives to Improve Efficiency

The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.

ASLEF understands the desire to align incentives between train operators and Network Rail. We must seek to have an industry that works in unison to provide a more efficient, better value and most importantly high quality rail service.

ASLEF does however have major concerns over using "Alliancing" to achieve this. This involvement of profit making organisations in the maintenance of our infrastructure proved a disaster during the era of Railtrack. Following the Ladbroke Road disaster it became clear that profit making and rail maintenance are a potentially lethal combination. For this reason, the Union is concerned that financial incentives are creeping back into this safety critical area of the industry.

Whilst this consultation does not directly deal with alliances other than expressing broad support, the Union is concerned that it is enforcing a Route Level Efficiency Benefit Sharing (REBS) mechanism on all TOCs where an alliance does not exist. Effectively this will lead to a compulsory profit motive for all operating, maintenance and renewals expenditure.

ASLEF have concerns over how this may affect our members' jobs. It is essential for safety that train drivers are solely focused on driving and insuring they concentrate on observing the track ahead. The Union will therefore strongly resist

any attempts by Network Rail and Train Operators to devolve responsibilities from other grades within the industry to drivers.

The proposed REBS mechanism means that Train Operating Companies will have an even stronger financial interest in maintenance costs. This could well reflect on TOC staff and the tasks that they are asked to undertake. ASLEF members are neither employed by Network Rail or Alliances and as such will not accept taking on any responsibilities from those who are such as additional responsibilities in regard to signalling during periods of faults.

The aligning of incentives also raises some interesting questions with regard to regulation and fines resulting from delays. Under the new system, operators would pay track access charges to the Alliance or Network Rail and they would still be responsible for delay attribution penalties to the TOCs and FOCs. However as the rewards for meeting targets are joint and any profits or payments go to both companies, it will in effect mean if delays are the fault of either company there will be no penalty as they will be paying it to themselves.

ASLEF therefore cautions against any approach which introduces profit motives into the railway infrastructure and will oppose any devolution of responsibilities from other jobs into that of the train driver grade.

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