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Dear Ian,

Review of the Decision Criteria in part D of the Network Code.

Thank you for your letter of 10th June and for the industry briefing session.

First Greater Western supports the proposal.

The key benefit is that with an overriding objective in place the current haphazard priority given to different decision criteria in different circumstances by different people will now have to be with one constant aim, namely whole industry most efficient and effective solution.

In view of our general support we now concentrate on seeking to influence the detail such that the benefits can be implemented for stp and rules consultation as soon as possible:

- firm support for the overarching object which gives priority (once rights are honoured) to whole industry solutions, and makes plain that that includes funders so by default gives power to established slc (franchise Service Level Commitments) and local authority agreements. It stops an attitude being taken that possessions must be organised in the cheapest way for Network Rail alone;
- request that Route Utilisation Strategy remains a defined consideration, as otherwise train planning teams may tend not to include, and given that North of England - Reading passenger trains gained Southampton partly because it was a RUS recommendation even though at the time rights were probably not approved;
- suggest "providers" becomes "access beneficiaries" in the objective to enhance clarity; and
- support not giving priority to any consideration. Such a concept is not viewed workable (even if it were desired) as given the contractual need to provide the best solution in the interests of the industry as a whole, taking any one consideration as priority in each different circumstance will not lead to the objective being achieved in many.

Both the concept of ORR review and industry briefing prior to formal proposal for change to the Network Code is welcomed.

Yours sincerely,

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