

Feras Alshaker
Director, Planning and Performance



Jake Kelly
Managing Director, Eastern Region
Network Rail

By email only

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Dear Jake

Train punctuality and reliability on Network Rail's Eastern region

As you know railway passengers and freight customers depend on having reliable, punctual train services. This requires a whole-system approach, with Network Rail and train operating companies working together.

ORR has been closely monitoring the significant efforts you and your team have already made to improve passenger and freight outcomes, working with operators. I would like to acknowledge Eastern's co-operation with our enhanced monitoring and its open engagement with ORR, including the progress made in developing and implementing its existing performance improvement plan.

Current Performance

However, despite the delivery of improvement activities, your own projections show passenger and freight train performance moving further away from targets for the year.

This continues a slow decline in on-time services and an increase in cancellations evident during the past two years. While due in part to factors outside its control, this has been accompanied by a notable increase in the amount of delay attributed to Network Rail. Since August 2022, Network Rail's delay minutes per annum have increased from 2.4 million minutes to 3.3 million minutes; an increase remains evident, even once changes in train service are considered. Delay caused by operators has remained static across the same period, at 2.3 million minutes.

I note that train performance across the region varies, as do the challenges each route needs to address. Services on Anglia route generally operate with high levels of punctuality and reliability, although the route has recently identified significant challenges on the North London/Mildmay Line.



East Midlands route has seen an abrupt worsening of both On Time and Network Rail delay over the last year and, while North & East performance has stabilised to some extent, it remains at an historically poor level. Delay caused by track quality on East Coast has reduced, but overall delay has worsened and passenger outcomes have slowly declined.

Across these routes, the average effect of each incident has worsened but we have not seen evidence yet that the factors contributing to this (which may be different for each route) are fully understood and quantified.

Performance Plan

I ask that you review and then refresh the Eastern region's improvement plan that has been previously shared with ORR. We recognise each route's part of the plan may be sized differently and contain some different, appropriate initiatives specific to the challenges it faces; we do not expect a 'one size fits all' approach.

In assessing the plan we will consider the following principles:

- Is it doing the right things, and are proposed improvement activities based on evidence and appropriately prioritised in a timely manner?
- Will it do them in the right way – for example taking a strategic approach, and engaging people both within the route/region and in partner organisations?
- How will the quality of implementation be assured?
- How are the expected benefits quantified, when will they emerge and how will they be tracked?

Reflecting that the railway works as a system, we recognise this strategic review and the forecasting of benefits will require substantial engagement with train operators and should complement the recent activity of the Network Performance Board's work. We acknowledge that, having outlined what Network Rail will do to manage its own issues, the review might also then highlight some issues requiring wider "whole-system" consideration.

ORR recently intervened in response to poor train service performance on Wales and Western region. In response, Network Rail has produced a comprehensive improvement plan - which we consider is robust and evidenced. I ask that you review the analysis and evidence that underpins this plan, and its format, and use this to guide your thinking.

We would like to see your revised plan by 20 December 2024, and would welcome Network Rail setting out by return correspondence how it will review and refresh the plan and the precise date by which it will be delivered.

ORR will review the plan's robustness and quality, and I would be happy for my team to engage with you during the preparation phase if this would be helpful. ORR will



closely monitor Eastern's delivery of the plan and the improvements in passenger and freight services that follow.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. A copy of this letter will be published on our website in due course.

Yours sincerely

Feras Alshaker