



4th Floor Capital House,  
25 Chapel Street,  
London,  
United Kingdom,  
NW1 5DH

**Proposed Track Access Supplemental Agreement Between Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd & First Trenitalia West Coast Rail Limited Under Section 22A of the Railways Act 1993**

Dear Jonathan,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Network Rail's letter of 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 regarding Avanti West Coast's 30<sup>th</sup> Supplemental Agreement, as we continue to work closely with Network Rail as we develop our future plans. Please note that as a result of the Covid pandemic, as we build back our service level as the demand recovers, under direction from the DfT our plans to operate these additional weekend services have been deferred from September 2021 to December 2021. To reflect this, the Form P will be updated, and any reference to a commencement date of September 2021 will be amended to December 2021.

**Proposed Rights**

We would also like to thank Network Rail for their support of the proposed additional services that have been shown to fit into the timetable;

and for their continued collaborative approach to finding solutions for those services that as yet have not been accommodated:

<b>Saturdays</b>
9G48 21:20 Euston – Wolverhampton
<b>Sundays</b>
1A91 10:16 Chester – Euston
1A81 19:35 Chester – Euston
1B02 08:32 Wolverhampton – Euston
1B06 09:35 Wolverhampton – Euston

<b>Saturdays</b>
1D33 19:10 Euston – Chester
<b>Sundays</b>
1A58 16:36 Chester – Euston
1D87 13:08 Euston – Chester
1P04 18:29 Euston – Preston
9G50 18:43 Euston – Wolverhampton

[avantiwestcoast.co.uk](http://avantiwestcoast.co.uk)

Avanti West Coast Rail Limited,  
a First Group and Trenitalia FS Group company,  
Registered Office: 4th Floor Capital House, 25 Chapel Street, London, United Kingdom, NW1 5DH.  
1163 2900 (England) 0849442

To note: 9J48AG [Su] 18:20 London Euston – Shrewsbury and 1Z48AG [Su] 18:20 London Euston – Birmingham New Street have been included in the Network Rail response in error as neither were on the Form P and do not form part of the 30<sup>th</sup> Supplemental.

We continue to seek Firm Rights for these additional services, to secure the customer benefits associated with these proposed additional services for the long term. We understand that Network Rail's WCML Access Policy of 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 states new Access Rights will not be supported beyond December 2022. Noting it does not reference any preference towards Contingent Rights or restrictions on Firm Rights, and the performance modelling indicates that these Rights can be delivered robustly, we believe Network Rail are in a position to support Firm Rights up to Dec 2022 for the services that do fit into the timetable. If this is not the case, we would ask Network Rail to demonstrate the reasons behind this.

## **Context**

All additional services contained within the 30<sup>th</sup> Supplemental were included in Avanti West Coast's Bid (submitted October 2020) for the May 2021 timetable, which was at that time planned to be the full, pre-covid 9tph timetable, with additional services included. Validation work was carried out against that full timetable, and not a reduced 6tph timetable as Network Rail states in its response. After validation of the 9tph May 2021 timetable was completed, DfT gave direction that it needed to be reduced down to 6tph to reflect the Covid situation at the time.

We received the Offer for May 2021 on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021, having only been notified a few days prior that some services would be rejected with no detailed prior discussion with AWC. We do appreciate that Network Rail were working under increased pressure and within reduced validation timescales as a result of other last minute Covid related changes, but this last-minute communication meant we did not have enough opportunity to explore potential solutions (including the flexing of other operators' services) for the rejected paths. The Offer made no mention of any attempts to flex other operators' services, so we are unsure as to the extent this option was explored. We feel that had the validation period not been reduced, Network Rail may well have been able to accommodate more, or even all, of our additional services into the timetable.

## **Next Steps**

As a result of the reduced validation period for the May 2021 timetable, and the pressures on Network Rail during that validation period, we believe that not all opportunities to find compliant paths for the 30<sup>th</sup> SA additional services have been exhausted.

However, we now have an opportunity to work with Network Rail to identify solutions as part of the development process for the December 2021 timetable. Building on the pathing work Network Rail has already carried out, we will work with West Midlands Trains (as they have said they will support us in finding pathing solutions where possible) and Network Rail. West Midlands Trains have set up a December 2021 work package involving weekly meetings with Network Rail, which Avanti West Coast have been invited to and are attending. This will allow us the opportunity to spend much more time exploring pathing solutions in collaboration with West Midlands Trains whose services we may be looking to flex.

Should it become evident that any paths still cannot be accommodated after exhausting all flexing options, we will engage with Network Rail under our existing Engineering Access Strategy workstream to review and refine current 2 track railway plans at weekends to try to maximise travel opportunities for customers at times when demand is high. In the meantime, we have received assurance from Network Rail's Operational Planning Project Manager that Network Rail will continue to work with AWC to seek to accommodate the additional services.

We welcome the opportunity to continue to work through all options with Network Rail and other operators, to identify solutions to deliver these additional services and unlock deliver significant customer benefits.

Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "S. Rhymes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sue Rhymes

Track Access Manager, Avanti West Coast Ltd