

Jacqui Russell
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Brandon Peat
Accessibility & Inclusion Manager
Avanti West Coast
By email

16 May 2025

Dear Brandon

Approval of Avanti West Coast's proposal to extend its ongoing trial of an alternative to the handover protocol (electronic handover) for communicating between stations on assistance provision

Thank you for your email of 13 May 2025, which included a proposal for a second phase of your trial of the electronic handover, the first phase of which we [approved](#) in December 2024. Phase 1 of the trial is running from 2 February to 31 May 2025 and encompasses three Avanti-managed stations (Lancaster, Preston and Wigan North Western). This trial is taking place in line with our [Accessible Travel Policy Guidance](#), which allows an operator and ORR to agree an alternative process provided it has the same functionality and effectiveness as the telephone handover protocol.

You have [proposed](#) the following for Phase 2:

- Extension of the trial at Lancaster, Preston and Wigan North Western until 30 September 2025.
- Inclusion of two additional stations, Crewe and Stafford, in the trial until 30 September 2025 (start date to be confirmed, but expected by 30 June).
- The potential for further changes during the trial, to be agreed with ORR.

We approve Avanti's proposal to extend and expand trial use of the electronic handover for all assists on all services between the five stations listed above until 30 September 2025. For journeys involving any other station Avanti should continue to use a telephone call, as required by the handover protocol. Avanti may approach ORR with proposed changes during the trial and ORR will consider these on a case-by-case basis.

We have made this decision based on your reporting to us against the success criteria set out in your original proposal. You have confirmed that no assistance requests handed over electronically were reported as incomplete or failed, and that staff feedback has been largely positive. You have noted that the first phase of your trial provided a limited number of opportunities for the electronic handover to be used, resulting in a small sample size and challenges embedding the process among staff. Your Phase 2 proposal is intended to address this.

You have given us early indication of a potential third phase of your trial, to include assistance requests between Avanti and other operators. You have indicated that this may include Northern Trains, for whom we have recently approved a trial of the electronic handover between four of its stations – some of which have significant assistance request interactions with your trial stations. We encourage Avanti and Northern (as well as any other operators) to continue their collaborative approach to the electronic handover, and to consider how an inter-operator trial could fit into any future phases of your ongoing trials.

Please continue to provide interim monthly updates as you your progress through the trial's second phase. You may approach ORR during the trial with any proposed amendments to the trial. Please provide a full update on Phase 2's implementation by 31 August – this may also include any proposal for a potential Phase 3.

In the meantime, we will publish this decision letter, along with your proposal, on our website.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqui Russell

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