

John Larkinson  
Director, Economic Regulation  
Office of Rail and Road  
One Kemble Street  
LONDON  
WC2B 4AN

Email: [john.larkinson@orr.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:john.larkinson@orr.gsi.gov.uk)

10 July 2015

Dear John

### **East Coast Main Line track access applications: performance modelling**

In your letter of 22 June, following the ECML industry hearing on 12 June, you asked each applicant to respond on the issue of the need, or otherwise, for detailed performance modelling before you make any access decisions. This is Alliance's response.

In summary, we believe that there is no need for additional modelling work to be carried out before a decision on access rights is made.

In its ECML 2020 Capacity – Timetable Assessment Report published in December 2014, Network Rail highlighted some concerns about performance. It also made clear that it would carry out more detailed modelling as timetables were developed. At the industry hearing, Tim Wright set out Network Rail's case regarding performance. In doing so he appeared to support the position that detailed modelling could only be done once detailed timetables had been developed, which would have to be after rights were awarded. We agree with NR that it should work closely with operators to consider performance issues as the timetable is developed. This is best done through the Event Steering Group process as laid out in Part D of the Network Code.

Although NR suggested that operating 8 LDHS trains per hour on the ECML would worsen PPM on the route, it did qualify this by saying that it depended on the mitigations that could be put in place. A number of these mitigations were discussed at the hearing. Key amongst these were reliable rolling stock, right time departure and

infrastructure upgrades. NR's report has identified the importance of the following approved East Coast Connectivity Fund schemes in improving performance as well as capacity:

- Woodwalton to Huntingdon four-tracking
- Fletton Jn to Peterborough Down Slow upgrade
- Grade separated junction at Werrington to connect to the GN/GE Joint Line
- Enhancements to the east side of Doncaster station including a new platform, track layout changes to support parallel departures in the Up direction and bi-directional running to/from the GN/GE Joint Line
- Freight loops (or running line extensions) between Northallerton and Newcastle

It appears that some of these schemes were not taken into account when NR carried out the modelling work in 2014 because they were not committed at that stage.

One area we do not agree with NR on is its assertion that overtaking is a performance risk. On the contrary, we believe it is a lack of willingness to allow overtaking that is a performance risk. Rather than have performance allowance added on to running times, the recovery time can be built into dwell time at the overtaking point. A case in point is Peterborough, where the proposed upgrade of the Down Slow from Fletton Jn effectively provides a facility to overtake GTR trains terminating at Peterborough. This is quoted by NR as having a positive impact on performance, with which we agree. The proposed Connectivity Fund enhancement at York is also seen as reducing performance risk there. Freight loops between Northallerton and Newcastle are also planned, presumably for the explicit purpose of allowing freight trains to be overtaken. Again, this is accepted as reducing the performance risk rather than increasing it. We are not aware of any evidence that shows that overtaking, in itself, is a performance risk, and would challenge NR to provide some.

NR also notes in its capacity report that there may be performance issues from proposed patterns of Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) trains from December 2018. Although DfT has agreed a timetable plan with GTR, we note that GTR has not yet submitted an application for revised track access rights on the ECML. It is therefore very difficult to judge the full performance impact of all services.

**Alliance Rail Holdings**

88 The Mount, York, YO24 1AR

Tel: 01904 628904 – email: [info@alliancerail.co.uk](mailto:info@alliancerail.co.uk) – Website: [www.alliancerail.co.uk](http://www.alliancerail.co.uk)

Registered Office: Admiral Way, Doxford International Business Park, Sunderland, SR3 3XP

Registered in England Number: 07026295

Doncaster is a known performance black spot. Schemes noted above will all help to reduce performance risk and improve PPM. And although there are more LDHS services proposed in the track access applications you are considering, fewer are planned to call at Doncaster than now. VTEC currently calls an average of 3.5 trains per hour there (including the two-hourly York stopping service) and VTEC proposes to reduce this to 3 from May 2019. On top of this, there has been a significant decline in coal traffic, much of which has been staged at Doncaster in the past.

At the northern end of the route, VTEC's timetable conflicts with a number of existing TPE, Northern, CrossCountry and ScotRail services. We also note that VTEC's proposed timetable does not really match either of NR's options for service patterns between King's Cross and Peterborough. Whilst these conflicts may well be resolved by a recast it is clearly not possible to model performance satisfactorily until a new timetable has been developed.

Finally, we note that NR made it very clear in its capacity report that further performance modelling would eventually be needed, and set out what might be required in a 'stage 2' analysis. If the ORR deemed this work would be necessary before awarding rights, it should have said so as soon as possible after publication of the report last December, almost seven months ago, and asked NR to carry out the work as a follow-on exercise.

Yours sincerely



Ian Yeowart  
Managing Director