

Southern's response to the SBP consultation

Go Ahead will be submitting a response to the SBP on behalf of all TPCs in the owning group. These comments are restricted to those issues in the Sussex, Kent & Wessex Route Plans which are of concern to Southern.

Overall we believe the SBP provides a sound basis for planning Network Rail's activities and funding requirement for the next control period and has started the process of building firm foundations for subsequent control periods. However, for Sussex, clearly the age of the infrastructure compared with other routes, is a cause for concern and therefore we would expect to see a plan that extends well beyond CP5 that addresses the shortfall in renewal, particularly on the Brighton main line.

Network Rail needs to invest in and improve our asset base; however this needs to be done in a way that minimises disruption to our customers so that we can continue to grow our business. In other words, NWR need to find ways to deliver more in less time/less disruption. We are actively supporting Network Rail in this, for example

currently we are working with Network Rail to look at how the renewal of several S&C units on the Brighton main line during CP5 can be delivered more efficiently by looking at overnight possessions rather than the traditional weekend blocks.

We believe that NR need to exercise more control over their track and signalling renewal contractors to get both quality and cost outputs under greater scrutiny.

The delivery of Thameslink relies very heavily on achieving very high levels of operational performance; we have concerns that the assets on the Sussex route will not deliver sufficient levels of reliability to meet the demands of that project.

Capacity on the Brighton main line remains an issue and despite improvements on how capacity is utilized, it appears that other than perhaps to rely on Thameslink as the solution, no long term plan on how additional capacity can be created is yet formalized.

There are several stations in the London area where platforms will not have been extended to accommodate 10 car services as part of the HLOS train lengthening programme. These stations are currently slightly shorter than the 162m required to accommodate 8 car trains, but are still served by trains which are not equipped with Selective Door Opening (SDO) equipment. As a result, we advise passengers not to alight from the rear coach but as these trains are not fitted with SDO, the train doors still open. NR should take the opportunity to extend the platforms at these stations to safely accommodate 8 car trains.

The Sussex Route Plan (page 32) states that: “Crowding on suburban services into London Bridge has been substantially relieved by the Sydenham slow line 10-car project) and the opening of the ELL Phase 1 in 2009. As a result both Southern and LOROL services are currently providing ample capacity on this route.” It is true that crowding on London Bridge services has been relieved, however LOROL services are now very overcrowded on the route. This will be alleviated to some extent by the planned extension of LOROL trains to 5 car formation; however it is likely that capacity will become an issue for this route within CP5.

The Wessex and Sussex route plans are inconsistent concerning the proposals for signalling re-control in the Epsom/Dorking area. We understand that Epsom will be controlled from the Three Bridges ROC, as shown in the Sussex Route Plan (page 51), whereas the Wessex Rout Plan (Page 47) shows that Epsom are goes to Wessex ROC.

The Kent Route Plan makes the following assumption: “For Southern, some upturn in fleet reliability is assumed, but only to the levels of the other franchises as industry good practice is adopted.” Given that Southern is an industry leader for reliability for a number of classes of its rolling stock we would question the basis of the statement.

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