

LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY BOARD MEETING

20 July 2018

STRATEGIC RAIL UPDATE

PART A – Network Rail Issues

Stevenage Turnback

Network Rail held an options selection meeting for this scheme on the 31 May. There is now a preferred option which will be developed over the next few months, at which point information will be made public. The assumed date for completing the scheme is mid 2021, but depending on the final design this could be earlier.

The replacement bus service between Hertford and Stevenage, which will run until this scheme is completed. On the 11 July it was announced that this will now be pushed back until May 2019 as the December 2018 timetable changes will be postponed. Trains are therefore still running on the route, although the additional half-hourly peak services were withdrawn with the introduction of the May timetable. There are on-going discussions with GTR about how the replacement bus service will operate.

East Coast Route Study

The final version of the East Coast Route Study is expected to be published on 19 July.

Euston HS2 Works

Work is planned to take place with major works taking place over a number of Bank Holiday periods for the next few years.

PART B – Other Issues

GTR May 2018 Timetable

The new timetable was introduced on 20 May. There have been numerous problems across the network in delivering this timetable, leading to cancellations and constant changes to the operating timetable.

A temporary timetable was introduced on 15 July. This will hopefully provide a reliable service, but will run fewer trains than originally promised for May. The GTR statement is that the temporary timetable will focus on peak services at the possible expense of off-peak services.

Once the temporary timetable is known, there needs to be an exercise to consider the priorities for introducing any of the dropped services in the December 2018 timetable, and if there are any needs for additional stops on services to provide a better service for particular stations.

London Northwestern Railway

London Northwestern Railway have a committed obligation in their franchise agreement to develop station travel plans across the network, including in Hertfordshire at Watford Junction and Hemel Hempstead stations. The travel plans will be developed in partnership with the county council, borough council and other stakeholder groups. The aim of the travel plan process is to look at the station as a transport hub and to identify ways in which integration with other modes of transport can be improved particularly public transport and active travel modes.

InterCity East Coast Services

InterCity services on the East Coast (which serve Stevenage) were transferred to LNER on 24 June. LNER is the “Operator of Last Resort” under control of the DfT, and will operate these services until the new East Coast Partnership franchise is introduced in 2020.

East Midlands Franchise

The specification for the East Midlands franchise (known as the Invitation to Tender (ITT)) was published on 7 June.

The ITT has continued with the consultation proposal of removing intercity stops south of Kettering. This will reduce direct access for Hertfordshire residents / businesses to northbound long-distance services to e.g. Sheffield and Leicester.

The Leader of the Council has written to the Minister for Rail setting out Hertfordshire's concerns. HCC will also arrange meetings with each of the three franchise bidders, who are able to bid for a service level above that of the DfT's ITT minimum.

West Coast Partnership Franchise

The closing date for bids for the West Coast Partnership Bids was 13 July 2018. The franchise will run existing West Coast Main Line intercity services from September 2019, and will also run High speed 2 services from 2026. The franchise ends in 2031, with an option of a three year extension.