

CR's strategic fit with the existing rail network

This note sets out Central Railway's views on the strategic fit of its proposals with the existing rail network and services and the impact the scheme will have on future SRA objectives.

Central Railway is intended to complement Britain's existing railway network. To this end, the company proposes to establish a framework to ensure that its proposals are not detrimental to the existing network or services. In essence, this framework will guarantee that existing services (and planned growth) will be maintained. In addition, the company will provide other freight and passenger operators access to Central Railway on commercial terms. These will be negotiated on a non-discriminatory basis as is required under EU legislation. The commercial terms may well be lower in some cases than in others to attract and encourage what would otherwise be marginally viable traffic (subject in all cases to the provision that they must be consistent with rules on non-discriminatory access).

Interaction with the existing network

The number of places where Central Railway interacts with Network Rail and existing services has been reduced to a minimum, which means that the strategic fit should be a straightforward matter.

There is no shared use with passenger services between Leicester and the Channel Tunnel. North of Leicester, shared use occurs on approximately 20% of the route.

Existing and potential links with the rest of the UK network along the route create opportunities for additional freight services using Central Railway's track, to the extent that the SRA and freight operators wish to develop such services.

Possible SRA high-speed passenger line

The SRA has given a presentation to the company of its study of a possible high-speed north-south passenger line. The study is limited to studying the economic case for additional capacity for high-speed services and, if that case is established, a further study will assess whether this could be provided on existing lines or by creating a new line. However, if the SRA should, at a future date, consider developing a high-speed line that might use part of Central Railway's route, it should be possible to accommodate segregated operations within the same rail corridor. The construction of Central Railway is not therefore a bar to the subsequent development of such a line.

Interaction with franchised passenger services

The company has agreed to accommodate all existing franchised passenger services on the lines it acquires, so as to provide both for the current level of service and for the development of services over the current planning horizons. The company is discussing with the DfT a framework in which the SRA would be guaranteed such grandfather rights.

Interaction with freight services

In the same way as grandfather rights for passenger services will be secured by the SRA, the company will provide access for existing freight services on sections of line it acquires from Network Rail. The track access charges paid by these operators will continue to be received by Network Rail. These freight services are mainly low volume and the few interactions that exist are mainly north of Leicester.

The company envisages that there will be considerable scope for freight operators to use Central Railway's infrastructure for additional services, either to provide for growth in services or as an alternative to using Network Rail's infrastructure. Charges for these will be negotiated on commercial terms and on a nondiscriminatory basis.

The company has approached EWS and Freightliner with a view to discussing how they might use Central Railway's line. In addition, the company would be keen to explore with the SRA, DfT and freight operators the extent to which, by providing additional north-south freight capacity, Central Railway would ease pressure on the West Coast Main Line to the benefit of both passenger and freight services and at no cost to the Government. Indeed, the company has redesigned the Leicester and Manchester corridors in part to accommodate the SRA's desire to remove freight bottlenecks in these areas.

Interactions with Network Rail

Where it is taking over lines, the company proposes to acquire property rights from Network Rail. It does not envisage paying substantial sums to acquire ownership but would pay for upgrading the lines and would meet all operational and maintenance costs. While Network Rail would continue to receive all track access payments from existing services, it would be relieved of all capital and operational expenditure. Continuing operational cooperation will be required between Network Rail and Central Railway, involving operators as necessary, especially where services run on both lines. This interaction is currently being discussed with the DfT and we envisage that it will be part of the policy framework provided by the hybrid Bill.

Contribution to SRA objectives

Central Railway will contribute to the SRA's objective of increasing the proportion of freight carried by rail. Central Railway's services alone will increase the amount of freight carried by rail by the amount set out in the SRA's 2010 objective. It will take more than five million

lorries off the roads each year when fully operational in 2015.

The investment in Central Railway will contribute to achieving SRA objectives while relieving the public purse of operational and maintenance costs. Network Rail will benefit from track upgrades and no maintenance costs on Central Railway's track, yet will continue to receive access fees from existing services. Central Railway will also contribute towards the goal of developing interoperable services with mainland Europe - it is the only significant stretch of European (UISC) standard freight railway likely to be proposed in Britain. In addition to this direct contribution, Central Railway will bring international best practice in project management. Specific, stated SRA policy aspirations that Central Railway could contribute towards include the following:

- developing a core network for rail freight with clearances for 9' 6" containers
- providing access for higher structure gauge trains between the Channel Tunnel and London
- de-bottlenecking Leicester station with the linkage of the Syston and Wigston junctions
- developing freight diversionary routes around central Manchester
- upgrading the Trans-Pennine route including reopening the Woodhead Tunnel
- freight enhancements on the Trans-Pennine route to provide better links between Liverpool and the Humber Ports
- improved access for freight from Liverpool to the WCML and other routes including gauge enhancement
- a network of interchanges linking road and rail networks
- Airtrack rail link between Heathrow and Staines
- A direct link from WCML and other routes to Heathrow airport
- increased capacity between London and Yorkshire including increased freight gauge
- improved access to freight terminals in the North West, North East and the Midlands.

We are not aware of any stated policy aspirations which would conflict with Central Railway.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this document, no responsibility can be taken for errors or omissions made.