



Brian Hopkinson  
Track Access Executive  
Office of Rail Regulation  
One Kemble Street  
LONDON  
WC2B 4AN

6 October 2008

Dear Brian,

### **Network Rail East Coast Main Line (ECML) Capacity Assessment Report**

I write in response to the recently submitted Report as identified above. Grand Union & Grand Northern (and Grand Central) has been involved in all the industry meetings concerning a 'standard pattern' ECML timetable and has been advocating the move towards such a timetable since 2005.

Whilst a tremendous amount of work has been undertaken by the Leeds Timetabling Team, it has been clear that there are very many permutations of possibilities for a developed timetable, and it is regrettable that one particular sub-optimal timetable should be chosen for submission, and for which performance assessment has been undertaken.

It is disappointing to note that the performance assessment has given a result that was wholly predictable by most attendees, and Network Rail continues to be at odds internally over deliverability. What is interesting however is that the Report makes no mention at all of a 'standard pattern' timetable helping to improve performance, particularly as Transpennine Express's recently submitted Section 22 application (6 October 2008) states at 4.1:

*The parties [Network Rail and First TPE] consider that the new pattern of service will have a positive impact on other operators through the development of a standard hour timetable and the benefits this brings (improved performance, additional capacity, consistent connections – generating additional business for other operators).*

Grand Union & Grand Northern would agree with those comments, and no doubt following the collaborative work undertaken recently with ATOC, would train operator colleagues. Network Rail unfortunately continues to give out conflicting messages.

**Grand Union Railway Company Limited**  
River House, 17 Museum St, York YO1 7DJ  
Tel: 01904 633307 Fax: 01904 466066 e-mail: [info@grandunionrail.com](mailto:info@grandunionrail.com)  
Website: [www.grandunionrail.com](http://www.grandunionrail.com)  
Registered in England No. 5851210  
Registered Office: 2 Temple Back East, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EG

Doc # 326807.01



It is also rather misleading to use the PPM of a smaller operator such as Grand Central, particularly as one service (out of six) delayed reduces PPM by 17%. This is an unfortunate outcome of operating a smaller service group and is an area often seized upon by larger operators.

Grand Union & Grand Northern, (and previously Grand Central), has consistently put forward the case that a standard pattern timetable would assist in releasing much needed capacity on the ECML, and in line with ORR guidance has worked with the industry on the ECML RUS, making a formal application to operate Bradford services which is entirely consistent with RUS development and final output.

Geoff Appleby the RUS advisor at the DfT summed up the position on this Report very well in an email to Network Rail on 25 September 2008, and Grand Union & Grand Northern would hope that the email (copied to ORR) will be available for viewing on the website as part of the consultation exercise.

Grand Northern's (previously Grand Central's) submission for services between Kings Cross and Bradford Interchange is the longest and most consistent submission made to Network Rail (and subsequently to ORR via a Section 17 application). Trains are timetabled that would allow the service to begin during the duration of the December 2008 Timetable, and Grand Northern is confident that following a re-cast to standard pattern all the destinations (but not necessarily the quantum) currently sought by operators via Priority Date Notifications, or formal Section 17/22a submissions to ORR can be accommodated.

As has been identified by colleagues at the various meetings attended, the full remit from the ORR has not been met, including no work undertaken post 2012 and the output appearing to be constrained by current timings.

However, the main output from the report is clear in that 6 passenger plus 1 freight is achievable and workable, but that finalisation of an acceptable and optimal timetable has not yet been achieved.

From a 'fresh start' position, work co-ordinated by ATOC has shown, at a high level, how a completely different approach can improve quantum even further, and Grand Union & Grand Northern believe that further acceptable paths can be found that meet the aspirations of nearly all operators, just as industry work following the Grand Central decision in 2006 identified paths for Leeds Half Hourly, additional Hull paths, services to Sunderland, and, following the RUS, paths to Bradford Interchange.



Further work will clearly offer differing short-medium term options and be able to take a more detailed look at an emerging timetable post 2012 when upgrades and rolling stock issues should be more defined, as clearly, at least in the short term, the availability of suitable rolling stock will have an impact on any allocation of identified capacity.

Yours sincerely

Ian Yeowart  
Managing Director (Grand Northern)