

ECML Network Rail capacity report - London TravelWatch response

From: Jerry Gold [mailto:Jerry.Gold@londontravelwatch.org.uk]
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Subject: East Coast Main Line - Network Rail's capacity report - consultation

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East Coast Main Line - Network Rail's capacity report - consultation

This report is commendably frank in raising as many questions as it answers, and it clearly has to be regarded as only the start of work in progress.

From the London TravelWatch perspective, I would highlight two specific points.

- a) The calling pattern for Stevenage is not fit for purpose. The primary requirement here is for direct service to the main destinations, i.e. Leeds, York, Newcastle and Edinburgh. This scheme only serves Leeds properly, and York in one direction only.
- b) The manipulations to fit in the through services between London and destinations beyond Edinburgh lead to very unsatisfactory results. To lose the mid-morning train to Aberdeen cannot make commercial sense, and for the train from Inverness to London to leave as early as 0622 is to make it unusable for the long-distance leisure and tourist traffic which it is designed to serve. If anything, this train should be leaving Inverness later than its present 0755, in order to provide connections from the Kyle and Far North lines.

A key issue with this draft is that it does not adopt the mirror-image principle, which is the reason why we see the oddity of Stevenage having trains from York but to Lincoln. It also explains the unsatisfactory nature of many of the suggested open access paths, which suffer from widely different journey times in different directions.

We prefer the timetabling approach taken by Passenger Transport Networks in their work for ATOC, as this yields better results for passengers in terms of services offered and network connectivity. It may be that this requires other changes such as diversion of freight via the joint line, and some of the forthcoming upgrade works (e.g. the additional slow lines between Alexandra Palace and Finsbury Park). Any timetable introduced before these points can be addressed might be better compiled by working backwards from that situation and creating a temporary version to cover the interim period.

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