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Track Access Rights on the East Coast Main Line

Thank you for email of 29 February 2008 concerning track access rights on the East Coast main line.

Transport Scotland do not currently bid for or hold access rights and therefore it would be inappropriate for us to complete the proforma supplied, we would however wish to make the following comments.

The ORR have noted within their consultation the importance of this significant part of the national network, Transport Scotland would like to re-emphasise the importance of Scottish Ministers' aspirations to improve journey times, as was previously highlighted in Scotland's Railways and the High level Output Specification, as well as the Guidance issued by Scottish Ministers to ORR in 2006.

Whilst recognising that there is a clear requirement to ensure that the overall capacity of this route is optimised, it is requested that due consideration should be afforded to Scotland's need for availability in order to increase capacity at the top end for growth and the possibility of future expansion of services.

Any additional access rights on the ECML could have performance and growth implications for Scotland's railways and will therefore have to be considered in line with Ministers' long term aspirations of delivering improved services and a high speed rail link between Scotland and London. The challenges on this route are principally associated with volume of traffic and reliability of services. Due consideration should also be paid to the future capacity increase committed to by the National Express InterCity East Coast franchise which will deliver a significant acceleration to the Anglo- Scottish average journey times from December 2010.

I hope this is helpful.



MALCOLM REED