



# HIGH SPEED TWO PHASE ONE INFORMATION PAPER

## A2: FUTURE TRAIN SERVICE PATTERNS ON THE WEST COAST MAIN LINE CORRIDOR

This Information Paper describes the railway industry processes to approve a new timetable for the West Coast Main Line once HS2 is operational.

It will be of particular interest to those potentially affected by the Government's proposals for high speed rail.

This paper was prepared in relation to the promotion of the Bill for Phase One of the scheme which is now enacted. Although the contents were maintained and updated as considered appropriate during the passage of the Bill (including shortly prior to the enactment of the Bill in February 2017) the contents are now historic and are no longer maintained.

If you have any queries about this paper or about how it might apply to you, please contact the HS2 Helpdesk in the first instance.

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# A2: FUTURE TRAIN SERVICE PATTERNS ON THE WEST COAST MAIN LINE CORRIDOR

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. High Speed Two (HS2) is the Government's proposal for a new, high speed north-south railway. The proposal is being taken forward in two phases: Phase One will connect London with Birmingham and the West Midlands and Phase Two will extend the route to Manchester, Leeds and beyond.
- 1.2. HS2 Ltd is the non-departmental public body responsible for developing and promoting these proposals. The company works to a Development Agreement made with the Secretary of State for Transport.
- 1.3. In November 2013, HS2 Ltd deposited a hybrid Bill<sup>1</sup> with Parliament to seek powers for the construction and operation of Phase One of HS2 (sometimes referred to as 'the Proposed Scheme'). The Bill is the culmination of nearly six years of work, including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the results of which were reported in an Environmental Statement (ES) submitted alongside the Bill. The Secretary of State has also published draft Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMRs), which set out the environmental and sustainability commitments that will be observed in the construction of the Proposed Scheme.
- 1.4. The Bill is being promoted through Parliament by the Secretary of State for Transport (the 'Promoter'). The Secretary of State will also appoint a body responsible for delivering the Proposed Scheme under the powers granted by the Bill.
- 1.5. This body is known as the 'nominated undertaker'. There may well be more than one nominated undertaker – for example, HS2 Ltd could become the nominated undertaker for the main railway works, while Network Rail could become the nominated undertaker for works to an existing station such as Euston. But whoever they are, all nominated undertakers will be bound by the obligations contained in the Bill and the policies established in the EMRs.
- 1.6. These information papers have been produced to explain the commitments made in the Bill and the EMRs and how they will be applied to the design and construction of the Proposed Scheme. They also provide information about the Proposed Scheme itself, the powers contained in the Bill and how particular decisions about the project have been reached.

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<sup>1</sup>The High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill, hereafter 'the Bill'.

## 2. Overview

- 2.1. HS2 offers the opportunity to recast the West Coast Main Line (WCML) timetable to make better and potentially different use of the capacity on the existing network that will be released when Phase One starts passenger operations.
- 2.2. The design of rail service patterns will not be directly affected by the provisions of the Bill. Therefore, it is not considered that the future rail service is an issue that the Select Committee should hear petitions on. However, it is the act of building the new railway that creates these opportunities and raises choices about how to utilise released capacity. For this reason, this note sets out information about how future rail services are likely to be developed and timetabled.

## 3. Key processes in future service planning

- 3.1. Service design, re-design and timetabling are normal processes on the GB railway. The timetable changes affecting the WCML in 2026 are likely to be significant, but major timetable revisions have occurred regularly since privatisation and will continue to occur<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.2. There are a number of well-established statutory, regulatory and administrative procedures in use on the railway to ensure changes are made in a considered and structured way. These processes promote high-quality, demand-led service planning, and ensure that capacity allocation and timetabling decisions are fair and taken in line with statutory and regulatory duties. In relation to future services on the WCML, these processes will be used in order to build an open and shared evidence base, consult passengers, communities and freight users, establish options and take decisions at the appropriate points in the run up to the operation of a new timetable on the WCML in 2026.
- 3.3. It is a fundamental principle that rail services on any part of the rail network can be altered, and should be altered, where this is appropriate in order to make better use of the assets and infrastructure. Therefore no train operators, communities or station users on any part of the GB network can be assured that today's service pattern will continue in perpetuity. Train services have evolved, and should continue to do.
- 3.4. The key processes which currently operate to ensure good service and timetable design are:
  - A. Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process (LTPP)

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<sup>2</sup> A fundamental timetable redesign that will affect a huge number of commuters will be led by the new Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchisee, working with Network Rail in the run up to 2018, when the new train fleet begins operations on the upgraded track through the London core. Other major service revisions will be undertaken at a similar time as the new Intercity Express Programme (IEP) trains enter service on the Great Western and East Coast main lines.

As required by its regulated Network Licence, Network Rail uses this process to work with operators, local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to develop scenarios for demand, agree priority uses for the capacity available and assess value for money options for investment. Outputs support later investment decisions and are used to inform franchise specification and the service propositions developed by franchised train operators in their franchise bids.

- B. The industry investment and output planning process for each regulated five-year Control Period (CP).

The rail industry is funded and regulated in five year Control Periods, with Control Period 6 (CP6) starting in 2019 and running until 2024, when CP7 begins. The key statutory and regulatory processes include the issuing of the Secretary of State's High Level Output Specification and the Office of Rail and Road's Periodic Review and final determination. These processes set the funding available and the regulated outputs for Network Rail, establish investment priorities and sets overall capacity, safety and performance outputs for the rail industry.

- C. Franchising, including the Secretary of State's franchise specification and service development undertaken by franchise bidders and operators.

Potential service requirements are consulted on in the development of new franchise competitions, and the results are included in franchise agreements. Typically specified service requirements include early and late services, weekend services and stops at smaller stations. The frequency of services or stops across the franchise may also be contracted. The franchising approach aims to give operators contractual freedom, where appropriate, to vary and develop the services they operate to respond to commercial experience and passenger demand, and to improve efficiency and innovate, including by developing new markets. Such service development is subject to the regulated processes in D.

- D. The regulated timetabling process and regulated track access decisions.

Before any train service can be introduced, it must be approved by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) which has regard to its statutory duties in taking its decisions, and must take account of the results of consultation. The starting point for the timetabling process is the track access rights which are held by operators through their Track Access Agreements. Applications for track access rights are considered and determined by the ORR as independent regulator. Timetabling requires detailed work to establish the technical capabilities of the rolling stock and infrastructure, and will take account of up-to-date operational experience of performance and reliability.

- 3.5. It is not in the power of the Promoter or the nominated undertaker to make commitments in respect of future decisions of the ORR on track access or timetabling. The Promoter is also not responsible for the options and

recommendations developed by Network Rail as it delivers its regulatory planning obligations through the LTPP.

- 3.6. The Promoter considers that the existing industry processes are necessary and appropriate in order to deliver value for taxpayers and the best outcome overall for passengers and freight users. Planning the network as a whole, on the basis of up-to-date evidence, will ensure that the country makes best use of the future rail network based on the priorities and travel demand as they actually are in the 2020s and beyond.

## **4. Developing post-Phase One services through the industry processes**

- 4.1. As part of the next stage of work in relation to post-Phase One services on the WCML corridor, Network Rail is carrying out research and engaging with users, communities and businesses in order to identify the priorities for passengers and freight users on the WCML corridor. This work is underway and provides a key input into the next stage of planning work led by Network Rail in line with the LTPP. The Promoter is working with Network Rail to ensure there is open and effective engagement so that future plans are based on a strong understanding of passenger, community and freight priorities.
- 4.2. The second stage which commenced in 2015, is the carrying out of detailed planning work for the WCML corridor led by Network Rail as part of the LTPP. This work establishes the options, alongside strategic benefits for freight and passenger services including frequency, capacity and rail performance. This planning work is being undertaken in consultation with local authorities, LEPs and freight and passenger operators and will identify options to funders for investments in Control Period 6.
- 4.3. Where appropriate, options for services on the WCML corridor post-Phase One that are identified in the LTPP process will be fed into the wider industry planning for rail investment. WCML proposals will then be considered alongside other proposals for investment on the network to ensure overall value is achieved and that the rail network as a whole supports delivery of the key priorities for the country. Work to determine investment priorities on the national network during 2019-2024 (CP6) will be undertaken between now and 2019. The government's High Level Output Specification (HLOS) for CP6 will be published in 2017. Further consideration will be given to timing to ensure the LTPP process fits with the planning for CP6 and CP7.
- 4.4. Current franchise agreements will all have terminated before 2026, when the major service changes will occur. In many cases, the next franchise term could also terminate before that date. The timing of franchise competitions in the 2020s will be planned by the government in a way that takes account of the wider changes which will occur when HS2 Phase One starts operations.
- 4.5. The contractual requirements for future franchisees in respect of the train service will be developed by the government in the run up to letting the relevant

franchises, and will be consulted on with passengers and stakeholders before the proposition is issued to bidders. Bidders could be asked to carry out some of the planning during bid or after franchise commencement, in order to make sure commercial and operational expertise are harnessed when it comes to the design of services.

4.6. In due course, train service timetables for the WCML corridor will be developed using the regulated railway timetabling processes as they exist at the time. Timetabling will take account of the most up to date information on rolling stock performance and network capability. Timetables and service patterns are not set in stone. Once developed and in operation it is likely that timetables will continue to be reviewed and developed in light of operational experience, changes in demand, wider rail funding issues, new access applications, commercial aspirations and rail user priorities.

4.7. The Government has set out the following high level principles to be used in order to ensure service development makes best use of the released capacity that HS2 Phase One delivers:

- an aim that all places with a direct London service retain a broadly comparable or better service after Phase One opens;
- to provide additional commuter capacity where it is most needed;
- to spread the benefits of long distance and inter-regional services to the many towns and cities that can be served by the capacity created on the existing rail network;
- to fully integrate Phase One services into the wider national rail network;
- to provide capacity for the growing rail freight sector; and
- to improve performance by making timetables more robust.

4.8. These principles align well with the range of objectives and considerations already in use in the rail industry for long term planning, access decisions, franchising specification and timetable decisions.

## **5. The released capacity opportunity**

5.1. When Phase One of HS2 becomes operational, it is estimated that it could attract approximately half the passengers who would otherwise use WCML train services. This will not only reduce crowding, but will create the opportunity to recast the WCML timetable. The benefits of the high speed line are described in the strategic case, including the potential benefits for current and future WCML passengers and freight users. As set out in the strategic case, the prize is significant, with opportunities for more commuting capacity, more regional journeys and more rail freight.

- 5.2. The processes outlined above are absolutely crucial to developing future services patterns and timetables. Without prejudging any of that work, examples of high level service ideas which could be considered include:
- targeting train path capacity on stops between London and the West Midlands in order to better meet the demand for travel from the communities on this part of the WCML;
  - rearranging trains so there is less variation in train speeds, enabling more trains to be run. This type of change has the potential to create a major capacity enhancement. For example, it could equate to two additional commuter trains in peak hours (a 25% increase in capacity) and an additional freight train path per hour throughout day;
  - increasing inter-connectivity for passengers travelling between intermediate stations on the route; and
  - rationalising train speeds, train pathing and stopping patterns to improve the reliability of all services. Punctuality and reliability are the top priorities for rail passengers.

## 6. More information

- 6.1. More detail on the Bill and related documents can be found at: [www.gov.uk/HS2](http://www.gov.uk/HS2)
- 6.2. More detail on the LTPP operated by Network Rail can be found at [www.networkrail.co.uk/Long-Term-Planning-Process/](http://www.networkrail.co.uk/Long-Term-Planning-Process/)
- 6.3. More detail on the industry investment processes, the High Level Output Specification and the regulator's Periodic Reviews process can be found on the websites of the Office of Rail and Road: <http://orr.gov.uk/> and the Department for Transport: [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport).