



Office of Rail and Road
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WC2B 4AN

West Coast Trains Limited
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Victoria Square House
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3rd July 2017

Dear Mr Ian Williams

Please find enclosed (Annex A), West Coast Trains Limited's formal response to Alliance Rail's Section 17 Application for Access Rights to operate between London Euston and Blackpool North commencing from the Subsidiary Timetable change in May 2019.

We look forward to receiving further information from Alliance Rail in due course.

Yours sincerely

Sue Rhymes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Rhymes".

Handwritten initials "PP" in blue ink.

Darren Horley

Head of Commercial Operations, West Coast Trains Limited

Annex A

3.1 Executive Summary

- The section notes “...Alliance employed a consultant to access capacity, the remit of this work was agreed by Network Rail”. VT understands that this application has been in development over a considerable time, which has caused a stifling of train service development on the WCML. What has materially changed to cause Alliance to undertake a further report on WCML capacity, and what differences does Alliance expect to see in that report compared to previous studies produced by NR on the subject?
- The section notes “SoAR plan were minded to support the application” (note: Darren ask for SoAR meeting notes) but then states “...the current application cannot be formally supported by Network Rail”. This appears contradictory given that independent capacity modelling (agreed between Alliance and Network Rail) has not been completed. What is NR’s position on this application, when will the analysis be completed, and will it be shared as part of this application process?

4.1 Benefits

- What timetable planning rules have been assumed as part of the timetable development activity supporting this application?
- Initial analysis of the specimen timetable provided in Annex A appears to indicate that the proposed services are in direct conflict with existing services on the route. Can validated F3 prints be provided as well as commentary on what assumptions have been made on existing train services? Our understanding from developing work as part of HS2 cross-industry workstreams has indicated that whilst there may be capacity available for additional EPS services, capacity available for non-EPS services is not understood.
- The TT provided appears to be theoretical rather than validated, how therefore can turnrounds be planned to be robust?
- Could Alliance confirm the actual date of rolling stock availability, given that current industry understanding is that the proposed rolling stock may not be available from May 2019?
- “It will be possible at a later date to increase capacity by adding vehicles.” Could Alliance confirm the performance and planning impacts as additional vehicles are added?

4.2 Adequacy

- The units with only 7 passenger cars have sectional running times broadly equivalent to a class 350 unit at 110mph...” Could Alliance explain the SRT calculation methodology and how it relates to other rolling stock (almost all of which has distributed power rather than locomotive and rolling stock) in use on the route?
- Class 91 / Mark 4 have never operated over 125mph in passenger service. Is it reasonable and achievable to expect a 30-year old train to operate at 140mph? What assumptions have been made in this respect?

4.3 Flexing Rights

- “The rights sought provide a great level of flexibility for Network Rail and the industry so that most efficient use of capacity can be made to develop a new timetable.” The current WCML timetable is optimised around existing rights, rolling stock and service patterns, and the specification for the new West Midlands franchise appears also to be based around existing WCML rights. The specification for West Coast Partnership is not yet understood. Is this assumption ‘to develop a new timetable’ correct going forward?

4.5 Specified Equipment

- Statement of compatibility
 - What is the process, and who is leading?
 - What are the power supply / power draw implications?
- “Alliance has engaged with Network Rail and others on route clearance...”. Please explain the process for gaining route clearance for this new fleet, given that it hasn’t operated on WCML since privatisation and the route has seen following significant remodelling and infrastructure renewal since the ‘special services’ operated. Who is leading on that activity?
- Are there any power supply / power draw implications that need to be considered?

5.1 Train Operator Performance

- “...maintained at Arriva TrainCare Crewe, with one services overnight at Wembley”. We know that Arriva Crewe is already congested due to work undertaken there already, and the single-lead access on/off depot. What will be the method of operation there to avoid and improve congestion and performance issues impacting on depot throughput and delivery?
- Wembley is also close to capacity, and has been so since Arriva Rail London began using Willesden ‘C’ sidings. What safeguards will be in place to ensure no impact to VT on sites that are already congested and/or close to capacity?
- What is the staff expertise plan for depots with currently limited class 91 / mark 4 / DVT knowledge?
- Thunderbird assistance – where will diesel thunderbirds be based and who will supply them? What will be the hours of operation?
- Stranded passenger principles – who would be expected to assist a stranded train, and in what circumstances?
- Class 91 performance – what are the autumn performance assumptions?
- Class 91 performance – what is the risk mitigation for a pantograph failure?
- “All trains will be self-despatched”. What assumptions have been made about despatch where TRTS is in place and actuated by station staff?
- What are your control arrangements and what level of route competence will their route control have?

6.1 Enhancement Details

- “(The Stafford Area Improvements Project)...enhancement was funded and built on a business case delivering two long distance services” – were these not EPS paths?