

NETWORK RAIL WESSEX ROUTE STUDY CONSULTATION**SOLENT TRANSPORT RESPONSE****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Wessex Route Study is an important document, as it defines the planned investment in the rail network over the next 30 years. Rail already has an important role in the Solent area for both freight and passenger movements. Planned economic growth will significantly increase passenger and freight demand in the Solent. It is therefore important that the rail network is fit for purpose to accommodate this growth. The ongoing work of the Solent Strategic Land and Infrastructure Board (where Network Rail is directly represented) and the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Spatial Strategy Review will help define the transport improvements required to support growth, including the role of the rail network.

The Wessex Route Study contains a number of proposed infrastructure enhancements. These are primarily driven by demand for services to / from London and increasing freight movements, particularly to / from the Port of Southampton. Solent Transport generally welcomes and supports this proposed investment and detailed comments are provided in the detailed response below. There are however some key areas that need to be addressed in the Route Study. A Rail Summit held at Hampshire County Council on the 8 January with South West Trains also recognised the need for an even more ambitious investment programme. This was attended by a wide range of political and business representatives, including those representing the Solent area.

Journey Times to / from London

Connectivity to and from London is important for the economic success of the Solent area. Journey times from London to both Portsmouth and Southampton are already uncompetitive compared to other cities across the UK. Once HS2 is completed, most major cities in the Midlands and the North will have faster or similar journey times to / from London. Whilst the proposed service frequency enhancements will improve “generalised” journey times, it is important that more transformational investment is made to reduce actual journey times.

Portsmouth to Southampton (East – West) Connectivity

The Route Study does not make any transformational proposals to improve Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) Connectivity by rail, which is a key priority for both Solent Transport and the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership. The levels of economic growth planned for the Solent area are significant and this will increase overall travel demand, due to more jobs and housing. Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) rail services are currently slow and under-utilised. It is important that rail services are significantly improved to make them a more attractive option to fully support economic growth, improve labour mobility and ensure that increasing travel demands do not lead to unacceptable levels of congestion on the road network.

This is likely to require more transformational and innovative improvements to the rail network and further study work is required to determine the appropriate solutions. The Wessex Route Study should commit to undertaking this work. Transport work supporting both the Solent Strategic Land and Infrastructure Board and PUSH Spatial Strategy can help determine the necessary enhancements to the rail network. Some specific issues to be addressed include:

- Improved rail connectivity between Portsmouth and Southampton through increased train frequency and reduced journey times to increase economic interaction between the two cities;
- Improved rail connectivity between major settlements and employment areas; and
- Improved rail connectivity to Southampton Airport to / from the east

Other Issues

Other issues of importance which are not noted in the Study include:

- finding a long term and sustainable solution for Island Line; and
- ensuring that full consideration is given to inter-connectivity between the rail network and other modes of travel to ensure journeys are as seamless as possible, including smart ticketing.

1. Introduction

1.1 Solent Transport welcomes the opportunity to respond to Network Rail's Wessex Route Study consultation and appreciates the direct involvement to date through the Wessex Regional Group meetings. Within the Solent area, the levels of planned growth are significant in terms of population and employment. Freight is also planned to grow significantly, as the international port facilities at both Southampton and Portsmouth further expand their operations. It is essential that the rail network accommodates a greater proportion of passenger and freight movements within and to/ from the Solent area, in order to increase travel choice, improve labour mobility and relieve congestion on the road network. Solent Transport supports the principles of Network Rail's Long Term Planning Process, as this provides an appropriate framework to plan and deliver the necessary investment in the rail network to ensure it can accommodate this growth in the short, medium and longer term.

1.2 This response focusses on issues that directly impact on rail issues within and on routes to / from the Solent area within the Wessex Route Study boundary. Solent Transport will primarily comment on issues at a strategic level, although comments are made on more detailed issues where appropriate. It is anticipated that the four constituent Solent Transport authorities (Isle of Wight Council, Hampshire County Council, and Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils) will also be submitting responses to the consultation. Responses are also anticipated from Borough Councils within the Solent area.

1.3 Solent Transport generally welcomes the investment proposals outlined in the Route Study, but does believe that more transformational levels of investment will

be needed in the rail network to accommodate growth in travel demand in the Solent area and full details are given in the response below. A Rail Summit held at Hampshire County Council on the 8 January with South West Trains also recognised the need for an even more ambitious investment programme. This was attended by a wide range of political and business representatives, including those representing the Solent area.

2. Baseline

- 2.1 The Baseline section of the Route Study is an accurate assessment. Solent Transport particularly welcomes the need for the Route Study to take account of connectivity into other more transformational rail projects including High Speed 2 (HS2), Southern Access to Heathrow and Crossrail 2. More detailed comments on these are made below.

3. Conditional Outputs

3.1 Main Line Long Distance Services to / from London

- 3.1.1 Improved connectivity to / from London is important for the economy of the Solent area. The key issues to be considered here are **capacity** and **journey time**.
- 3.1.2 Looking initially at capacity, section 3.2.2.3 outlines the significant peak hour capacity pressures on main line services into London Waterloo, with a requirement for 60% more capacity to meet conditional outputs in 2043. The report notes that increased use of 3+2 seating is a potential way to increase capacity, but also notes its unpopularity with passengers. 3+2 seating has already been used as a way of increasing capacity on Portsmouth to London peak hour services. Whilst journey time (considered below) is an important element, passenger comfort is also a key consideration. The standard seating arrangement for long distance services throughout the UK is 2+2. It would be possible to increase capacity on a range of services to other UK cities with similar journey times from London by providing 3+2 seating. However, this is not being considered as an option and nor should it be considered an acceptable option for services from the Solent area to / from London.
- 3.1.3 Looking now at journey times between London and Portsmouth (102 minutes – 44 mph average speed) and Southampton (83 minutes – 57 mph), it is clear that these are relatively slow compared to other UK cities, despite close geographical proximity. This will be further exacerbated when HS2 is completed and will mean most major cities in the Midlands and the North will be closer or as close to London than either Portsmouth or Southampton. Not only that, but inter-connectivity between those cities will also significantly improve, due to both HS2 and the more recent proposals for a new east-west rail connection across the Pennines. Some proposed journey time examples from London to cities on the HS2 route are shown below, as quoted in the HS2 report *Rebalancing Britain*:

- Manchester - 68 mins
- Leeds - 83 mins
- Sheffield - 79 mins
- Nottingham - 68 mins
- Birmingham - 49 mins

3.1.4 Without improvements to journey times between London and both Portsmouth and Southampton, the Solent area will be disadvantaged economically and it is important that this issue is addressed. Section 3.3.3 of the study indicates the conditional output *to improve “generalised” journey times to and from central London, for significant centres of population which are broadly 30 miles or more from central London.* It is also noted how the London and South East Market Study also defined how this conditional output should be achieved:

The London and South East Market Study suggests that, in many cases, this conditional output can be achieved by operating a mix of two or three fast trains per hour serving the major generators of 03 Interpreting the Conditional Outputs demand on a route, travelling (on average) in excess of 70 miles per hour, with an additional semi-fast service(s) picking up demand from smaller stations on the route.

3.1.5 The current average speeds quoted for journeys on the London to Portsmouth and Southampton routes are 44mph and 57 mph respectively, which is some way short of *in excess of 70 mph* and needs to be addressed.

3.2 Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) Connectivity

3.2.1 Solent Transport welcomes the recognition of the need to improve connectivity across the Solent area, particularly between Portsmouth and Southampton in (CO32) and between Basingstoke and Portsmouth (CO33). Between them, these two conditional outputs cover the two main east to west Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) rail routes.

3.2.2 As Table 3.4 illustrates, the average journey time between Portsmouth and Southampton of 53 minutes (average speed 29 mph) is a very poor level of connectivity compared to other equivalent city pairs. Unsurprisingly, there is currently very little economic inter-action between Portsmouth and Southampton. In its Strategic Economic Plan, the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership has identified the need to improve Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) connectivity, which would allow increased labour mobility and boost the overall economic performance of the area. Given the peak hour congestion problems on the parallel road network (particularly the M27 motorway), it is important that rail plays an important role in improving this connectivity. This is not just for journeys between the cities, but for other journeys within the Solent area connecting residents with employment opportunities. There is also a need to improve accessibility by rail to Southampton Airport to / from the east, which is covered in more detail below.

3.2.3 Two current pieces of work emphasise the need for improved connectivity and

need to be recognised by the Route Study. Firstly, the Solent Growth Deal has established the Solent Strategic Land and Infrastructure Board, chaired by the Cabinet Office, which has been tasked with producing a Land Asset Strategy, for the release of public sector land for regeneration and redevelopment. This will be supported by a Solent Transport Investment Plan. Network Rail is directly represented on the Board. Running in parallel, is the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) Spatial Strategy Review. This follows the Strategic Housing Market Assessment work, published in 2014, which identified the need for over 4,000 homes to be built per annum in the Solent area over the period to 2036, supported by associated development, including employment, education, retail and leisure schemes. The transport implications of this level of development will be significant in an already congested area. It is not clear that the work in the Market Study has identified the transport implications of these growth aspirations.

- 3.2.4 Whilst significant investment has recently been secured for both the strategic and local road networks, this is unlikely to provide sufficient transport capacity to accommodate this growth in the medium to longer term. Other modes of travel, including rail, will need to cater for an increased proportion of journeys in order to deliver a transport system that can accommodate this growth, without leading to unacceptable levels of congestion on the road network. This is likely to require more transformational solutions and levels of investment, akin to that now being developed in the North of England to improve East to West connectivity there, to address similar issues to the Solent.
- 3.2.5 Recommendations on developing rail solutions to improving Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) Connectivity are considered in more detail in section 6.7 and 6.8 below.

3.3 Rail Connectivity to Airports

- 3.3.1 Solent Transport welcomes the recognition in the Route Study of the importance of providing connectivity to airports.
- 3.3.2 Rail connectivity to **Heathrow Airport** from the Solent area is currently poor. Passengers either have to use the coach link from Woking or travel via Central London, using the Piccadilly Line or Heathrow Express from Paddington. Journey times for all these options are uncompetitive and providing direct rail access from the Solent area is important. The proposal for a direct service from Southampton to London Paddington via Heathrow, utilising the proposed Western Access is welcomed. However, this does not directly benefit the eastern part of the Solent area and it is important that the proposed Southern Access will provide the necessary connectivity improvements. This should include provision of direct services to and from Heathrow from the Solent area to minimise the inconvenience to passengers of changing trains en route at Woking. Solent Transport looks forward to commenting on the Heathrow Southern Access Route Study, once this is published for consultation.
- 3.3.3 The Route Study recognises the existing rail service provision to **Gatwick Airport**.

This currently provides a direct hourly service from both Southampton and Portsmouth, which also serve other towns in the Solent area (e.g. Fareham and Havant). Whilst this is generally adequate, if the Davies Commission chooses Gatwick as the location of an additional runway and a more significant increase in capacity, consideration will need to be given as to whether this level of service provision should be increased.

- 3.3.4 Whilst the proposed 2043 passenger service specification for **Southampton Airport** provides good connectivity to and from destinations on the Bournemouth main line, the need for improved rail connectivity to / from the east is a long term aspiration. It is specifically recognised in the Solent LEP's Strategic Economic Plan as part of the overall requirement to improve Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) connectivity and should be included within the 2043 passenger service specification.

3.4 Freight

- 3.4.1 The Solent area generates a significant amount of rail freight traffic, particularly the movement of containers and automotive traffic to / from the Port of Southampton. Solent Transport welcomes previous, current and future investment to increase the amount of rail freight handled on routes to and from the Solent area. Investment in both rail infrastructure (particularly the W10 gauge enhancement project and terminal facilities) has led to rail increasing its modal share in recent years, which clearly demonstrates the value of such investment. This will be further enhanced by ongoing infrastructure improvements to increase train lengths to 775m and wider capacity improvements, such as the new flyover at Reading and the forthcoming East West Rail project, which will provide alternative access to the West Coast Main Line, avoiding the Birmingham area. Finally, the Electric Spine project provides an opportunity for many freight services to use electric traction, which will improve performance and reduce pollution at source.
- 3.4.2 The Route Study identifies further significant increases in demand for rail freight over the period to 2043. It is important that sufficient capacity is provided to accommodate this in order to minimise the impact of freight on the road network. Solent Transport therefore welcomes CO36.
- 3.4.3 A key issue to be considered here is the routing of freight traffic between Basingstoke and Southampton. The direct route via Winchester and Eastleigh is capacity constrained and freight trains are already constraining performance on this route. Consideration should be given to diverting a higher proportion of freight services via Andover, Laverstock and Romsey, particularly during peak periods. Whilst this route is physically longer, it does have more capacity to accommodate growth.

4. Cross Boundary Services

- 4.1 Solent Transport is generally happy with the worked examples from cross boundary passenger and freight services. The assumption of new regular services connecting both Bournemouth and Bristol with Brighton are welcomed. However, there may

need to be flexibility in the way these services are integrated into any overall proposals for improving Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) Connectivity.

5. Making Best Use of the Network

- 5.1 Solent Transport supports the principle of making best use of the network to deliver short term improvements.
- 5.2 Three options are proposed to increase capacity for main line long distance services to / from London Waterloo. These could be implemented separately or in parallel.
- 5.3 Option 2 would lengthen two services in the high peak hour. This is likely to happen anyway by the end of CP5 and is supported.
- 5.4 Option 3 would increase the proportion of trains using 3+2 seating in the high peak. As noted above in 3.1.2, this is unpopular with passengers and does not provide an adequate level of comfort for the length of journeys involved. Solent Transport does not therefore support this proposal.
- 5.5 Option 4 would increase the number of high peak main line services from 24 to 26 trains per hour. Solent Transport would support this solution.
- 5.6 Looking further west on the main line routes to both Southampton and Portsmouth, the Route Study concludes that it is difficult to accommodate the 2043 passenger and freight service specifications with the existing CP5 infrastructure. This highlights the need for more substantive infrastructure investment.

6. Control Period 6 (CP6) Investment Choices

- 6.1 Solent Transport supports the approach of the Route Study to identify the investment priorities for CP6 (2019 to 2024), as this is the next substantive period where rail investment has yet to be defined.
- 6.2 In terms of improvements that are relevant to the Solent area, Solent Transport supports in principle the following proposed CP6 investments without further comment at this stage:
- Grade separation of Woking Junction to allow up to 28 trains per hour into Waterloo;
 - Grade separation of Basingstoke Junction to increase passenger and freight capacity;
 - Introduction of European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS) to increase capacity; and
 - Improved passenger circulation at Wessex stations.
- 6.3 Two other potential CP6 capacity enhancements are supported in principle, but with additional comments and caveats.
- 6.4 The option to provide double deck trains from Southampton Central to London could potentially deliver a step change in capacity. Providing double deck trains

have 2+2 seating and the necessary infrastructure enhancements to accommodate these trains could be delivered, Solent Transport supports this option in principle and awaits the outcomes of the further work with interest.

- 6.5 The option to provide an electrified freight diversionary route between Southampton and Basingstoke via Andover would maximise the flexibility of the Electric Spine project to provide 25kV electrification through to Southampton and the Port of Southampton. It is also essential that 25kV electrification is provided between Basingstoke and Southampton via Winchester, which was the original proposal. Solent Transport would support this proposal and would note the following issues:
- It is essential that the Romsey to Eastleigh via Chandlers Ford route is included within the electrification. This would allow the whole Salisbury to Romsey service via Southampton and Chandlers Ford to be converted to electric operation; and
 - Consideration should be given to providing additional capacity between Eastleigh and Romsey (through an additional passing loop or double track section) to allow for future increases in train frequency. If this cannot be justified in the short term, the infrastructure should be designed to accommodate these improvements at a later date
- 6.6 Although the Route Study does not explicitly require all the capacity enhancements at Southampton Central station until after CP6, it notes that *there is potential for this scheme to be prioritised for delivery in CP6 to support local development opportunities and to provide performance benefits to the area*. Southampton Central is the busiest station in the Solent area and serves the city centre, which is a significant regeneration area, including the area immediately adjacent to Central Station. Solent Transport supports delivering the station capacity enhancements in full alongside opportunities for redevelopment and regeneration, in a very accessible location adjacent to a major railway station. There should also be economies of scale by delivering these station capacity improvements in parallel with the Electric Spine project for 25kV electrification.
- 6.7 The Route Study does not include any specific proposals to substantially improve Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) Connectivity or substantially improve journey times to / from London during CP6. This would effectively mean that it would be at least 10 years before such investment would be forthcoming in CP7. Through the work of the Solent Strategic Land and Infrastructure Board (where Network Rail is represented) and the PUSH Spatial Strategy, Solent Transport recommends that a full assessment is made for improved east to west rail connectivity within the Solent area, in order to support economic growth and improve labour mobility. The specific issues that need to be addressed include:
- Improved frequency and reduced journey times between Portsmouth and Southampton;
 - Improved access to / from Southampton Airport and the east; and
 - Improved connectivity between major settlements and employment centres.

6.8 This consultation response will not pre-judge the specific solutions that will emerge from this work, but requires that the Route Study commits to undertaking the necessary study work. Historic studies examined the provision of Eastleigh Chord to link the Botley line directly to Southampton Airport and doubling of the single track section between Botley and Fareham. However, it is likely that the levels of growth in the Solent area will require more transformational levels of investment and innovative solutions, if rail is to provide a genuine alternative to the private car. In terms of East – West connectivity, the North of England faces exactly the same issues as the Solent area and is examining transformational levels of investment to address these. A similar approach is required in the Solent.

7. Accommodating the conditional outputs in 2043

7.1 This section of the Route Study identifies the proposed investment needed post CP6 (2024 onwards) to accommodate the conditional outputs defined for 2043.

7.2 Main Line Peak Capacity

7.2.1 The Route Study promotes a range of options to deliver the Inner Main Line capacity into Waterloo, including combinations of 5th tracking east of Surbiton, Crossrail 2 and European Train Control System (ETCS). Solent Transport does not have a specific view on the optimum solution to deliver the necessary capacity, but supports the principle of delivering the necessary capacity and awaits the outcome of further work to identify a preferred solution.

7.2.2 In terms of Outer Main Line capacity, Solent Transport supports the proposed capacity enhancements at Guildford and Southampton Central, but would seek delivery of the latter in CP6 as noted in 6.6 above.

7.3 Main Line Off Peak Capacity

7.3.1 On the Basingstoke to Southampton line, Solent Transport supports the preferred capacity enhancement for 4 mile long dynamic loops between Winchester and Micheldever.

7.3.2 There are no identified improvements at Eastleigh Station. Given the predicted increase in both passenger and freight services, particularly as the latter often have a crew change at the station. There is also the need to consider what improvements are necessary at Eastleigh as part of any Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) Connectivity improvements. Solent Transport would therefore anticipate that capacity improvements would be necessary at Eastleigh and recommends that these are considered in more detail, particularly if any need to be delivered during CP6.

7.3.3 The Route Study identifies the need for increased capacity in and out of Portsmouth and recommends the reinstatement of Platform 2 at Portsmouth Harbour. Whilst Solent Transport welcomes this in principle, the provision of rail services within the Portsmouth area needs to be considered as part of the overall requirements to improve Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) connectivity, which are likely to

require more transformational and innovative improvements than reopening a currently disused platform.

7.3.4 On routes between London and Portsmouth and Southampton, the Route Study assumes that there will be a significant increase in the number of off peak fast services. Solent Transport accepts that this will reduce the “generalised” journey time, due to smaller waiting time between services, but still believes that further more substantial investment is required to reduce actual journey times. This is to address the issues highlighted in 3.1.3 to 3.1.5 above.

7.3.5 The Route Study notes the need for signalling improvements to accommodate the proposed 2043 service provision between St Denys and Cosham on the Southampton to Portsmouth route. Whilst Solent Transport welcomes this in principle, the provision of rail services along this route needs to be considered as part of the overall requirements to improve Portsmouth to Southampton (East - West) Connectivity, which are likely to require more transformational and innovative improvements.

8. Other Issues

8.1 There are some other issues that should be considered by the Route Study.

8.2 Island Line

8.2.1 The Route Study does not consider the need for any investment in the Island Line. However, the infrastructure and rolling stock is now life expired and it is important that a long term and sustainable solution is found for the future of Island Line. This needs to be a priority for CP6, as this will also coincide with the start of the new South West Trains franchise.

8.2.2 The Isle of Wight Council is keen to ensure the best possible solution is delivered as part of both the franchise extension to 2019 and in the longer term, beyond 2019. The Council and Solent Transport are working with local experts to consider what options might be possible and considers that the ideal solution would be the introduction of modern low floor vehicles. The Council will be pressing DfT Rail to include within the next franchise as a minimum the requirement to introduce more modern rolling stock, clock face frequency and better connections with the local steam railway. The necessary infrastructure changes should also be incorporated into the Route Study.

8.2.3 Solent Transport has previously responded on this issue to the consultation for the extension of the South West Trains franchise and the position is unchanged.

8.3 Connectivity with Other Modes

8.3.1 It is important that rail travel is as attractive and seamless as possible throughout the Solent area.

8.3.2 It is important that the necessary infrastructure is provided at stations to ensure high quality accessibility by all modes, including pedestrians, cyclists, buses and car

users. This is particularly important where station facilities are being enhanced.

- 8.3.3 Although potentially beyond the scope of the Route Study, improved connectivity should also extend to ticketing and maximise the opportunity for smart ticketing opportunities. Solent Transport has recently established the Solent Go travel smartcard, which currently covers bus, ferry and hovercraft services. It is important that this is also extended to include rail services.