

## NETWORK RAIL'S INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

### THE HENDY REPORT CONSULTATION



#### Introduction

Solent Transport was established in 2007 as a partnership of the four local transport authorities in Solent (Hampshire County, Isle of Wight, Portsmouth City and Southampton City Councils). Solent Transport was established to consider strategic transport issues across the Solent area as a whole. Solent Transport works in partnership with relevant organisations, including the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH), Solent LEP, Department for Transport, Highways England, Network Rail, South West Trains and the South Hampshire Bus Operators' Association. Solent Transport welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the Report from Sir Peter Hendy to the Secretary of State for Transport on the re-planning of Network Rail's Investment Programme.

Whilst Solent is part of the Wessex operating area, important passenger and freight connections extend through to the Midlands and North via Reading and Oxford. The Port of Southampton, in particular, generates significant volumes of container and automotive traffic to and from the Midlands and North of England via this route. Comments are therefore also made in relation to infrastructure enhancements on this important rail corridor.

#### **Do you have any comments on the projects, which have been selected for completion in CP5?**

Solent Transport supports the completion of the Wessex Capacity Improvements within CP5, including Waterloo, broadly in line with previous timescales.

Whilst the CP6 Development Fund is also retained in CP5, there is concern that the reduction in its budget from £57m to £31.9m, with apparent reallocation of funds to CP6, could delay the development of CP6 schemes. Within Wessex, this includes the development of essential capacity improvement schemes at both Woking and Basingstoke, to provide grade separated junctions. It is important that sufficient funding is made available in CP5 for the development and design of CP6 schemes.

#### **Do you consider that other projects, originally scheduled for completion in CP5, but now not planned to be completed in this Control Period, should have been prioritised ahead of the projects identified in the Hendy Report?**

From a Solent Transport perspective, the schemes in this category are on the strategic route to / from the Midlands and the North via Reading and Oxford, including:

- **East West Rail Phase 2 and Oxford to Bletchley Electrification**

In timescale terms, East West Rail Phase 2 as far as Bletchley is the most important scheme, as it provides an alternative route to the West Coast Main Line, north of Oxford for both freight and passenger services. As well as the additional journey opportunities this scheme

provides, including direct rail services from Oxford to Milton Keynes, it provides greater resilience to maintain through passenger and freight services, if the route via Banbury is closed for planned engineering work, or due to an emergency situation, as happened recently at Harbury Tunnel. On that basis, delivery of the scheme should focus on completing the section through to Bletchley as a priority, ahead of the upgrade onwards to Bedford.

Slippage of the electrification into CP6 is less critical for the Solent area, providing it is completed in advance of the full Electric Spine scheme (see below).

- **Electric Spine Development Programme**

Solent Transport is concerned that whilst proposals will be developed for the scheme as far south as Basingstoke, for delivery in CP6, development work will not now start on the Basingstoke to Southampton section until CP6, with delivery presumably delayed until CP7. Whilst it is appreciated that the Basingstoke to Southampton section of the route is potentially the most more complex to address, it is important that a preferred solution is identified in parallel with other sections of the scheme, to ensure that a comprehensively deliverable and affordable scheme can be implemented.

The Southcote Junction to Basingstoke component of the scheme does not make specific reference to the potential grade separation scheme at Basingstoke, which has been identified in the Wessex Route Study. There would clearly be economies of scale if these schemes can be implemented in parallel. It is also important that this scheme is completed in time for the opening of the Western Access to Heathrow, as this will allow through services to be provided between Solent and Heathrow Airport, providing dual voltage rolling stock is available (see below).

- **Western Rail Link to Heathrow**

This scheme is important to the Solent area, as it provides the first opportunity to deliver direct rail services to Heathrow Airport. As noted above, this is dependent on completion of the Southcote Junction to Basingstoke electrification scheme, which should therefore be delivered in parallel.

- **Oxford Corridor Capacity Improvements**

These improvements have not been significantly delayed and should be considered a high priority for passenger and freight movements between the Solent and the Midlands and North.

<b>Do you have any comments on the re-planning process generally?</b>
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The process appears to be generally sound, but it is important that when prioritising delivery, full consideration is given to implementing schemes that deliver the greatest economic benefits first, including full consideration of the inter-action between different projects in the programme.