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[Sent by email]

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Enquiries to Phil Marshall
Direct Line 07551 152754
Date 4 April 2016

My reference
Your reference
E-mail philip.marshall@hants.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Western Rail Link to Heathrow Consultation

Solent Transport is a partnership of the four transport authorities covering the Solent area (Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils and Hampshire County Council) and welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

Heathrow Airport is of key importance to Solent businesses and residents. It is the currently the UK's most important hub airport, with direct flights to a comprehensive range of worldwide destinations. However, public transport accessibility to / from Solent is relatively poor. There are currently no direct rail links and the only direct public transport access is via National Express coach services. These are reasonably convenient, but suffer from journey time reliability issues at peak times, due to congestion on the M3 and M25 Motorways. For rail passengers, the options are:

- Using rail – air link coach services to access Heathrow from Woking or Reading; or
- Travelling via Central London to access Heathrow via the Piccadilly Line or Heathrow Express from London Paddington.

Neither of these options is attractive, with relatively long journey times and the inconvenience of changing from rail services to either coach or Underground services, often with heavy luggage.

Responses to the specific consultation questions are provided below.

1) Do you agree with Network Rail's plans to improve access to Heathrow Airport from the West?

The Western Rail Link to Heathrow provides an opportunity for much more direct and convenient rail connectivity to / from the Solent area, via Reading and Basingstoke. On that basis, Solent Transport **strongly agrees** with the plans.

2) Do you have any comments on the preferred route for the tunnel?

Solent Transport does not have any specific comments on this.

3) How could the proposals be improved?

The proposed service pattern of four trains per hour would provide convenient access to Heathrow to / from Solent via a single change at Reading. However, it is also important that at least some of these services are extended to the Solent area via Basingstoke and eastwards to London Paddington via Old Oak Common, where a direct connection into HS2 is possible. This has been recognised in the proposed service pattern outlined in the Wessex Route Study.

Please note that this is an officer response, which will be ratified at the next Solent Transport Joint Committee on the 29 June 2016. I will write to you again, if the Joint Committee makes any further amendments to this response. Please feel free to contact me, if you have any queries.

Yours faithfully



Phil Marshall
Principal Transport Planner
Solent Transport