

## **Report to the Transport for South Hampshire Joint Committee**

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**Subject:** Response to Network Rail's London and South East RUS

### **Purpose of the Report**

To introduce a TfSH response to a consultation by the rail industry on a draft London and South East Rail Utilisation Strategy (RUS). The draft RUS sets out the rail industry's priorities for investment in new rail capacity over the next 30 years across all London termini, including routes into London Waterloo, looks at freight capacity across the South East and contains a specific 'Solent and South Hampshire' chapter, which intends to address a shortfall in level of detail on rail capacity issues within the sub-region in the 'First Generation' South West Main Line RUS, published in 2006. The final RUS will seek to influence the Department for Transport's (DfT) spending plans for the period 2014-19, and also influence the post-2014 round of rail franchises.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. That the officer submission to the consultation draft London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS), attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be adopted by the Joint Committee as the formal TfSH response to the consultation.**
- 2. That officers look to arrange an early meeting with the new Wessex devolved business unit of Network Rail to explore the scope for closer partnership working with the rail industry in line with the TfSH Rail Communications Protocol (June 2010).**

### **Introduction**

1. Transport for South Hampshire have submitted an officer response to a consultation on a draft London and South East (L&SE) RUS, as part of a 12-week consultation carried out by Network Rail on behalf of the rail industry.
2. This officer response, attached as Appendix 1, has been prepared following meetings of the TfSH authorities held during December 2010

and January 2011, and is consistent with the Vision for Rail in South Hampshire, adopted by the Joint Committee on 30 June 2009, and with Policy K of the Joint LTP3 South Hampshire Strategy, which was adopted by the Joint Committee on 22 November 2010.

3. This consultation period closed on 18 March 2011, so this report seeks to secure the formal support of the Joint Committee for this officer response. Any additional comments or views of the TfSH authorities agreed at the Joint Committee will be fed back to Network Rail.

## **Background**

4. Network Rail is responsible for working with the rail industry (including passenger and freight operators) to produce RUS documents that identify rail industry priorities for future investment to enable the network to have sufficient capacity to meet forecast growth in demand.
5. These RUS documents are used by the Department for Transport (DfT) in setting spending plans for the five year periods known as 'control periods'. Investment plans have been set for the current control period (2009-2014), known as Control Period 4 (CP4). The DfT have yet to allocate rail industry investment for CP5 (2014-2019). The rail industry are producing a London and South East RUS to help inform the DfT's decision-making on rail investment for CP5 and also to influence the post-2014 round of rail franchises. The current South West Trains rail franchise runs until February 2017.
6. The draft London and South East (L&SE) RUS is a 'Generation Two' RUS that seeks to build on the series of previous RUSs published between 2005 and 2010, and identify capacity gaps on all the main rail routes into London and options for resolving these. The RUS forecasts an increase of over 30% in rail commuter journeys into London during weekday morning peak hours by 2031. It is consistent with the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. Whilst the main focus of the document is capacity constraints at and on the approaches to the main London termini, the draft L&SE RUS contains a detailed study of the South Hampshire area, which was only partially covered by the 2005 South West Main Line (SWML) 'Generation One' RUS.
7. Network Rail, on behalf of the rail industry carried out a 12-week consultation of the draft L&SE RUS between 16 December 2010 and 18 March 2011. The comments received will be considered by the RUS Steering Group, and a final RUS will be published in Summer 2011.

## **Main points set out in the TfSH response**

8. The officer response to the draft L&SE RUS by TfSH makes comments on the chapter relating to capacity on 'outer' mainline services into London Waterloo, the chapter on freight and the chapter on South Hampshire, with the majority of comments relating to the latter.

9. In response to Capacity Gap F 'South West Main Line', in Chapter 7, the TfSH response supports the option of running longer trains on 'outer mainline' services from the South Hampshire area, of up to 16 carriages in length, to meet a forecast capacity shortfall of over 6,000 passengers in the 'high-peak' hour by 2031.
10. Chapter 9 on Freight forecasts that the number of freight paths between Southampton and the West Midlands and beyond will increase from 20 trains each way in 2010 to 51 each way by 2030. The TfSH response emphasises the important strategic role of the two international gateway ports in South Hampshire and their important contribution to the national economy, and notes that surprisingly, this chapter does not use the term "international gateway" ports. The response welcomes options to address capacity bottlenecks in the West Midlands, which should help enable this increase in freight flows, including proposals to route freight trains via Oxford, Bletchley and Bedford. The TfSH response also points out the need for track improvements at Eastleigh to reduce the delays to northbound passenger services caused by container freight trains stopping to change crews at the station.
11. Chapter 10 of the draft RUS covers capacity issues within the South Hampshire area. The TfSH response makes the following key points:
  - (i) The need for the 'policy context' section of this chapter to acknowledge the shared Local Transport Plan 3 Strategy for South Hampshire (particularly Policy K on rail) and recognise the important role of the recently established Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP);
  - (ii) Clarifies that were the Eastleigh Chord scheme and Botley line re-doubling delivered in the longer-term, that TfSH would wish to look at the feasibility of converting the Netley Line to either light rail or tram-train operation;
  - (iii) Welcomes the 'option' to introduce an additional hourly service on the Netley Line between Portsmouth and Southampton, possibly on a 'skip-stop' pattern with the smaller more lightly used stations retaining an hourly service (which could negate the need for tram-train or light rail);
  - (iv) The importance of improving direct rail access to the international gateway of Southampton Airport from the east (from Havant, Chichester and the coastline route from Brighton), which would enable a direct rail service to be introduced between the increasingly popular station of Hedge End and Southampton;
  - (v) The need to explore low-cost options for platform extensions at stations where affordable, in the South Hampshire area, if these would assist in reducing station dwell times;

- (vi) The need to improve the quality of passenger facilities at Portsmouth Harbour, Portsmouth and Southsea and Southampton Central, reflecting their status as public transport gateways to both cities and bus/rail interchanges.
- (vii) The implications for rail of the “cities first” approach to accommodating employment and housing growth;
- (viii) That the TfSH authorities do not share the view expressed within the draft RUS not to recommend the re-opening of the Marchwood and Hythe line to passenger traffic. The level of depth of analysis of the viability of this option is not comparable to the level of assessment of other options. The rationale that the rail service could not compete with the high frequency bus services offered by Bluestar 8/9. The response requests that the initial findings of a feasibility study being carried out on behalf of Hampshire County Council into re-opening be taken into account in the final RUS. It is considered that the restoration of this passenger service would offer a sufficiently attractive travel alternative to the private car, enabling congestion on the A326 between Hythe and Totton and the A35 Redbridge Road corridor into Southampton to be avoided;
- (ix) The importance of the Port of Southampton as a rapidly growing embarkation point for cruise passengers and the implications of this for rail.

### **Opportunities for closer partnership working on rail Issues**

- 12. On 21 February, Network Rail announced plans to establish two devolved business units covering Scotland and the Wessex area (all rail infrastructure on routes in Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and Surrey matching the South West Trains rail passenger franchise area). Both business units will be established by April 2011.
- 13. The rationale for the creation of devolved business units is to decentralise accountability to the route level so that Network Rail can get closer to its customers and be in a better position to deliver improvements to passengers and freight users, while reducing costs. Each devolved business unit will have its own route managing director.
- 14. The establishment of the Wessex devolved business unit offers an opportunity for TfSH to build on the formal framework provided through the Rail Communications Protocol (June 2010) agreed with Network Rail and South West Trains. This step by Network Rail should help foster closer partnership working with the rail industry, and would provide impetus to improved communication and information sharing.
- 15. One possible example of how this new structure could prove helpful is that through the L&SE RUS process, TfSH has yet to persuade

Network Rail of the business case for reinstatement of passenger services to Marchwood and Hythe. The new devolved business unit might see this aspiration differently, and could take a more positive view of this proposal, in light of emerging supporting feasibility work.

16. The concept of vertical integration, where the passenger franchise operator is also given responsibility for maintaining track and signalling (that currently rests with Network Rail), is being looked into by the Department for Transport, as one possible model for reducing the costs of the rail industry, through a simplified structure. With the South West Trains franchise coming up for renewal in February 2017, potential exists for the DfT to adopt a vertical integration model.

## **Conclusions**

17. The Joint Committee is invited to endorse Appendix 1, the officer response to the L&SE RUS consultation (submitted before the consultation closed on 18 March 2011), as the formal response of Transport for South Hampshire to this consultation. Following the Joint Committee meeting, a letter setting out any additional comments raised will then be sent to Network Rail.
18. It is proposed that the new Route Managing Director of Network Rail's devolved business unit be approached with a view to setting up a series of regular meetings to ensure TfSH can help to influence and inform decisions relating to future rail improvements within South Hampshire, building on the TfSH Rail Communications Protocol.

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background papers

**The following documents disclose facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report.**

NB the list excludes:

1. Published works.
2. Documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.

TITLE

LOCATION

*None*