

**Open Report on behalf of Richard Wills,
Executive Director for Environment and Economy**

Report to:	Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee
Date:	18 September 2017
Subject:	Rail Franchising

Summary:

This report updates the Committee on the position in respect of the 3 rail franchises which provide services across Lincolnshire. In particular, it outlines the consultation currently being carried out by the Department of Transport for the re-letting of East Midlands rail franchise.

Actions Required:

Members of the Highways and Transport Scrutiny Committee are invited to consider the report and:

- 1) Consider the position in respect of the East Coast Main Line and Northern rail franchises, and;
- 2) Comment on the proposed approach for responding to the DfT's consultation in respect of the East Midlands rail franchise.

1. Background

East Coast Main Line Franchise

- 1.1 The East Coast Main Line franchise awarded to Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) commenced in May 2015. This includes proposals for a new direct Lincoln-London service with 7 trains London-Lincoln and 6 trains Lincoln-London on weekdays (current just one in each direction) and 5 each way at weekends. It is due to commence in May 2019 using the new bi-mode Azuma trains currently being assembled at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham.
- 1.2 At recent meetings with Virgin Trains East Coast, they have confirmed that they are currently still on track to begin running the new services in May 2019. Work is ongoing to develop a final timetable which will be the subject of consultation nearer the time. VTEC are also keen to work with local stakeholders to promote the services and ensure that they are a success.

Northern Franchise

- 1.3 The new Northern franchise was awarded to Arriva Northern and commenced in April 2016. Services covered in Lincolnshire are the Lincoln-Sheffield route and the Sheffield-Grimsby/Cleethorpes service running on a Saturday only (3 trains in each direction) along the Brigg line.
- 1.4 A vastly improved Sunday service will begin operating on the Lincoln – Sheffield line from December 2017, with the number of trains in each direction rising from the current 4 in each direction to 13 Lincoln-Sheffield and 14 Sheffield-Lincoln. Currently it is not possible to get into Lincoln from Sheffield until 14:54 and into Sheffield from Lincoln until 15:15, but this will improve to 09:54 and 11:25 respectively.
- 1.5 It had been expected that the journey time between Lincoln and Sheffield would also be reduced (by around 10 minutes) in the December 2017 timetable. However, delays to electrification works elsewhere in the Northern area have meant that the cascade down of the necessary rolling stock to enable this has been delay. This is now expected to happen in May 2018.
- 1.6 In addition, the franchise will see the introduction of direct Lincoln-Sheffield-Leeds services, possibly in May 2018. These will ultimately be incorporated into the proposed 'Northern Connect' inter-urban services due to be launched in December 2019 using brand new trains to replace the ageing Pacer units.
- 1.7 The Northern franchise is currently managed jointly with DfT through the devolved Rail North partnership, which the County Council is a member of. However, this role is to be subsumed into 'Transport for the North', the proposed Sub-national Transport Body currently being set up across the north of England. Whilst Lincolnshire does not fall within the geographical area covered by Transport for the North (TfN), the authority will become a 'Co-opted Member' of TfN solely for the purpose of managing the Northern rail franchise.

East Midlands Franchise

- 1.8 The East Midlands rail franchise covers the majority of local rail services across Lincolnshire and is currently operated by East Midlands Trains. Renewal of the franchise has been delayed several times but DfT finally commenced a consultation on 20th July 2017, with a deadline for responses of 11th October 2017. The new East Midlands franchise is now due to commence in August 2019 for a period of 7 to 15 years.
- 1.9 At the meeting of this Committee on 13th June 2016, Members were updated on the local consultation carried out with the public and interested organisations in Lincolnshire during late 2015/early 2016, along with a summary of the enhancements to be sought by the authority. As mentioned above, since then the timetable for the start of the new franchise has slipped

and the DfT consultation expected in mid-2016 has only recently commenced.

- 1.10 At an early stage, it was agreed by East Midlands Councils' (EMC) Executive Board that maximum influence could be achieved by working together to present a united "ask" for rail improvements across the region. Consequently, a rail consultant engaged by EMC has worked alongside the DfT's franchise team as the work to date has progressed. This has enabled authorities to already feed into a series of evidence reports and other detailed information provided to DfT regarding the shortcomings of current services, rolling stock and stations, and to set out where improvements are desirable.
- 1.11 The DfT consultation comprises some 30 questions, with some being very general whilst others are location specific. Full details can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-east-midlands-rail-franchise> .
- 1.12 EMC have prepared a short "model response" to the consultation (attached at Appendix A) and are encouraging others across the region to use this as starting point for their own responses. They have also prepared their own fuller response to be submitted to DfT which currently runs to some 60 pages.
- 1.13 The pattern of current rail service across Lincolnshire has developed ad-hoc over many years and has been constrained by external issues, such as the lack of rolling stock nationally. Whilst some improvements have been secured (for example, additional stops at Hykeham station and new Sunday services on both the Nottingham-Lincoln and Grantham-Nottingham lines, the re-franchising process provides the opportunity for a fundamental review with the aim of securing improvements across the county.
- 1.14 In summary, the "ask" for Lincolnshire is as follows:

Frequency: Increased service frequency aspirations

- Lincoln to Nottingham/Leicester from 1 train per hour increased to 2 trains per hour. Aspiration for re-introduction of Lincoln to Birmingham direct services
- Lincoln to Doncaster from 5 trains per day in each direction increased to hourly service
- Grimsby to Lincoln/Newark North Gate from 8/7 trains per day increased to hourly service
- Strengthening of peak hour services between Sleaford and Lincoln, and Spalding and Peterborough
- improved seasonal capacity provision required on Nottingham to Skegness service
- Enhanced earlier and later train provision all routes
- Enhanced/new Sunday service all routes

Connectivity

- Improved timetable connectivity across the network, in particular:
 - at key stations on the East Coast Main Line (Peterborough, Grantham, Newark Northgate and Doncaster) to integrate with longer distance services to major cities
 - at Lincoln and Sleaford to provide improved interchange between services

Capacity

- additional rolling stock to allow service strengthening or additional services is desperately needed to resolve current overcrowding and cater for future growth, in particular:
 - on the Nottingham – Skegness route during peak holiday periods when there is severe overcrowding, and
 - on several local services (particularly those operating as a single carriage unit) where there is overcrowding at peak times

Quality

- new/refurbished rolling stock to meet the necessary DDA requirements and to improve journey experience for all passengers, including the provision of free wifi and charging points

Accessibility

- a programme of improvements to improve station accessibility and facilities, including:
 - additional help points and timetable information
 - the resolution of platform access issues such as those at Spalding, Sleaford and Stamford
 - a review of station staffing levels

Community Rail

- Funding support for exist and new Community Rail partnerships

1.15 The DfT consultation document contains a specific question regard level crossing closures in Lincolnshire as follows:

"The option of increasing the frequency of train services in Lincolnshire is being considered. As a consequence level crossing barriers will be down more frequently, especially those in Lincoln city centre.

Do you support increasing the frequency of train services in Lincolnshire despite the impact this may have on level crossing users?"

It is not clear why Lincoln has been singled out in respect of this issue since there are other level crossings across the East Midlands (including for example Spalding and Sleaford in Lincolnshire) which may be affected. This is highlighted in the proposed EMC response. Inevitably, this is a question of weighing up the economic and social benefits that improved rail services bring to local communities against the additional delays to road users due to increased crossing closure times. A possible response would to recognise the issue and state that should additional services be provided as hoped, then the authority would expect to work closely with other partners including DfT, Network Rail and the train operators to look for opportunities to mitigate the increase in delays to road users such as through improvements to signalling infrastructure and co-ordination of train arrivals at crossings. The example of the various improvements carried out in Lincoln (the East-West Link and new footbridge) can be used as an example of good joint working. The Committee is invited to comment on this issue.

1.16 The County Council's response to the consultation will take as its starting point the draft EMC response and enhance this to give more specific focus the need for rail enhancement across Lincolnshire. A final response will be agreed with the Executive Member for Highways, Transport and IT before submission to DfT.

1.17 The DfT are due to confirm the shortlist of prospective bidders in the Autumn. This will provide another opportunity to meet with the shortlisted bidders and lobby for the improvements sought. The DfT timetable for the delivery of the new franchise is:

- Invitation to Tender - April 2018
- Award of Contract - April 2019
- Start of Franchise - August 2019

2. Conclusion

The re-letting of the East Midlands rail franchise is an important opportunity to lobby for improvements to local and regional services. The County Council's response to the DfT consultation will press for the enhancements highlighted in this paper.

3. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out??

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	EMC Model Response

5. Background Papers

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
DfT East Midlands Rail Franchise Public Consultation	https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-east-midlands-rail-franchise
Highways & Transport Scrutiny Committee 13 June 2016 Item 9 - Rail Update	County Offices, Lincoln

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