



campaigning  
by the  
Railway Development  
Society Limited

**Policy, Lobbying and Campaigns Committee  
Network Development Committee**

Graham Richards  
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9<sup>th</sup> April 2012

Dear Mr. Richards,

**NETWORK RAIL'S LONG TERM PLANNING PROCESS**

We wish to comment on Network Rail's Proposed Long Term Planning Process as set out in the letter from their Director of Network Strategy and Planning dated 27 February 2012 to the Deputy Director of Rail Planning and Performance at the Office of Rail Regulation.

We are generally in agreement with most of the points raised in their submission, and have confined our comments to points that we consider do not address the issues adequately, or require a more detailed expansion of the point concerned. We have headed these and numbered them identically to the Network Rail submission.

**Section 3. Changes of context**

**Publication of the McNulty Rail Value for Money (RVfM) Report:**

While we would endorse the common-sense approach that rail planning should place more emphasis on making best use of the existing network before considering further infrastructure investment, we would contest certain relevant, and in our view flawed, assumptions contained in the McNulty Report. In particular there is an assessment that rolling stock utilisation set against passenger mileage is some 30% less efficient in the UK than in many other European countries, while failing to identify that this is almost entirely due to the very high level of peak period demand in the UK for home to work commuting compared to the much lower off-peak demand, and in contrast to nearly all other European countries where the daily passenger demand is "flatter" and the peak/off-peak demand contrast is not so pronounced, and where most rolling stock can therefore be more intensively used throughout the day. This inefficiency cannot be eradicated in the UK without imposing quite unacceptable peak period load factors on many services, or achieving a major social, economic and cultural shift away from long commuting journeys made at the same times each day. We therefore consider that some parts of the McNulty Report should be treated critically when examining its other proposals related to the shape of the network.

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## **Section 4. Proposed Long Term Planning Process**

### **4.1 Overview**

When considering the cross-boundary analysis between geographic RUS, (and clearly there will be overlaps in the studies), the temptation should be resisted to break up the longer services identified as needed, purely to meet a perceived objective to minimise crossing vague franchise boundaries. The passengers' best interests should be catered for first, rather than the franchise holders' existing or planned contracts. We are aware of numerous services that have been broken up in the past apparently to meet this franchise boundary objective, resulting in sometimes-major inconvenience to passengers, which we deplore. The result in some cases has been to drive many of the passengers away completely. We can provide examples to support this if requested.

### **4.2/4.3 Market Studies and Route Studies**

We feel that when analysing these results it is important to take full account of the likely passenger demand resulting from running, for example, one service each hour with an eight-car train, or two services an hour with two four-car trains, where greater frequency may attract an overall greater number of passengers per hour, because it is more attractive. Obviously this militates against the concept of making best use of resources, as the second solution involves twice as many train crews as the first. Similarly, there is little benefit for passengers in running two trains an hour rather than one if both trains are scheduled only a few minutes apart for a considerable part of their shared journey.

One of the solutions proposed in previous published RUS in areas or on routes where overall route capacity is at a premium, is to propose running longer trains (notwithstanding our comments in the previous paragraph), before looking at the need for substantial physical route reconstruction, since this will nearly always be a more cost-effective solution. Nevertheless we feel that progress in this direction has been remarkably slow so far since RUS first started to be published, and very few routes do in fact have maximum length trains running throughout the busiest periods. While we accept that overall rolling stock increases cannot be achieved quickly, there is limited extra rolling stock provision possible from the present outstanding orders with manufacturers. While the Government is not obliged to accept all, or indeed any, of the proposed various solutions submitted in RUS, Railfuture have studied all of them, and in our view, while we have criticisms and our own suggestions, the overall context of these studies is to propose effective solutions to real problems, the most common of which is to run longer trains. It is an obvious solution, and only requires the commitment to acquire the rolling stock, even if this would contribute to further erosion of the rolling stock usage corollary referred to in the McNulty Report.

## **5. Governance and stakeholder engagement**

We welcome the proposed comprehensive industry-wide sought input to the Rail Industry Planning Group (RIPG) undertaking this project, although we doubt that there will be any meaningful input from the Local Enterprise Partnerships, which anecdotally have so far shown negligible interest in rail service provision, or in how this could support economic growth in their areas.

Finally we would be pleased to have the opportunity to comment further on the results of this Long Term Planning Process by the RIPG when published please.

Yours sincerely,

*I. McDonald*

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Railfuture