



RESPONSE TO DRAFT WEST COAST MAIN LINE RUS

This response concerns those RUS options which affect passengers travelling from and to the East Midlands.

Passengers use the WCML at Northampton, and for journeys between East Midlands stations, the North West, North Wales and Scotland, accessing the route at Rugby, Nuneaton or Crewe. Since December 2008 such journeys have been handicapped by the loss of regular fast trains between Rugby and Nuneaton and Crewe, necessitating use of the new Trent Valley stopping (interurban) train service routed via Stoke-on-Trent. This service was welcomed for the improved access it gave to intermediate stations, but it has led to significantly extended journey times for longer-distance passengers.

Another handicap has been the reduced service frequency north from Crewe, with removal of Crewe stops by Euston to Glasgow trains. Connections are now only hourly, and into the Birmingham to Glasgow/Edinburgh trains which are often crowded.

We suggest that Generic Gap 4: Regional Links (page 101) should have the wording of the fourth bullet point amended to read 'lack of direct services between Watford/Milton Keynes/Northampton/Rugby/Nuneaton and the North West of the RUS area'.

Option OC1.1 – lengthening of suburban services

We support the lengthening of the busiest services between Northampton and Euston to a maximum of 12 cars, to reduce crowding on this route.

Options JT1.1 & JT1.2 – improved journey time between Euston and Glasgow

We welcome the proposed additional hourly train between Euston and the North West. In Option JT1.1 (not recommended for implementation) the train would call at Rugby and Crewe hourly and Nuneaton two-hourly. In Option JT1.2 the train would call at either Nuneaton or Crewe in alternate hours but not at Rugby. We suggest that if this Option is adopted then the train should call at both Nuneaton and Crewe every hour. We believe that most passengers from Euston to Preston would use the non-stop Glasgow train, rather than the new stopping train which is likely to depart shortly after it each hour from Euston, so the small additional journey time to provide an additional stop by the latter would be of little consequence.

Option JT3.1 – diversion of Euston to Crewe interurban service via the WCML between Stafford and Crewe

We support this option as it would provide faster journey times for passengers travelling to Crewe and beyond. We would prefer this service to be extended to Preston rather than Liverpool to improve the service frequency between Crewe and Preston and provide a wider range of connections.

Option RL1.1 – extension of two evening peak Euston to Northampton services to Stafford

We note that this option is not recommended for implementation. However, we ask that it is reconsidered, as it would reduce the long (3-hour) gap in services from Northampton and Rugby to Nuneaton and beyond. Attributing additional train leasing and train crew costs to this option is disingenuous; these costs should be attributed more properly to those services to which the rolling stock which operates all day on the route is diverted currently at peak times.

Option RL2.1 – diversion of one Birmingham to Liverpool train per hour to Preston

We support this option as it would improve train service frequency between Crewe and Preston. However, we would prefer the Euston to Crewe train to be extended to Preston (see Option JT3.1).

Option RL3.1 – extension of Derby to Crewe service to Manchester Airport

We support this option which would restore a facility lost some years ago. However, we suggest that all trains would need to be of two car length rather than a single car, especially if Option JT3.1 is implemented and in consequence the Derby trains provide the only service between Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe.

Lightly-used stations

We note that the RUS makes no reference to service provision at certain lightly used stations, even though these are included on RUS area map.

Polesworth is served by one train per day in the northbound direction only. Norton Bridge, Barlaston and Wedgwood have been served by bus since 2004, and as the buses do not serve the station directly but only the locality these stations are effectively closed, without any statutory procedure having been followed. The RUS should comment on the (former) usage of these stations; indicate the infrastructure works which would be needed to restore full service to them; and if felt appropriate, recommend that a formal closure process be instigated.