



14 September 2011

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Alliance Rail Track Access Pre-Application Consultation:

I enclose the response of the West Coast Rail 250 Campaign to the above pre-application consultation. I hope it is acceptable to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Roberts", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr. Trevor Roberts
Chairman
West Coast Rail 250 Campaign

Alliance Rail Track Access Pre-Application Consultation: Response of the West Coast Rail 250 Campaign

1. Introduction

- 1.1. West Coast Rail 250 (WCR250) is a non-party political organisation which campaigns for improved and environmentally sustainable rail services along the West Coast Main Line (WCML) to support the economic development and social cohesion of communities along the WCML corridor.
- 1.2. West Coast Rail 250 has the following comments to make on the track access applications received by the ORR.

2. Comments

2.1. General Comments

- 2.1.1. WCR250 is content with the principle of Open Access operation, noting that in other areas Open Access operators have provided innovative fare offers and effective competition on service quality with the franchised operators. It does have comments to make on the detail of both applications received for operation on the WCML.
- 2.1.2. WCR250 supports in principle the proposals to reintroduce through services between London and Blackpool, noting the interest shown by several operators in providing these services. It does not wish to show preference to any one operator for this service, but is concerned to ensure that the overall package of services proposed by franchised and Open Access operators, taken together, best meets the needs of the communities served by the WCML. It would not support the granting of access rights to one operator which prevented the development or implementation of an overall service package maximising the economic or social benefits to communities along the WCML, regardless of the strength of the business case for the individual operator making the application.
- 2.1.3. In particular, WCR250 would oppose the granting of access rights which hindered the implementation of the agreed, cross-industry recommendations made in the WCML RUS and other relevant RUSs or equivalent strategies, such as the Northern Hub Study.

2.2. Alliance Rail Applications

- 2.2.1. While noting the differences between this proposed Application and Alliance Rail's previous application for track access rights on the WCML, West Coast Rail 250 believes that these have not addressed WCR250's concerns sufficiently for the Campaign to modify significantly the stance it took in its earlier response.
- 2.2.2. As noted in 2.1.2 above, WCR250 supports in principle proposals to reintroduce services between London and Blackpool. It also notes that Alliance Rail now proposes to operate its services with 200 km/h (125mph) rolling stock from the outset.
- 2.2.3. WCR250 notes that Alliance Rail's London – Blackpool and London – Carlisle services do not call at Wigan North Western. In other words, they do not provide the additional services calling at both Warrington Bank Quay and Wigan North Western recommended by the WCML RUS to allow Euston – Glasgow services to be accelerated. It should be recalled that, as well as their long distance function, WCML services provide the only local service between these two towns, both of which have populations of over 150,000. WCR250 has concerns that Alliance Rail's applications, if accepted in this form, may hinder or even prevent the implementation of an agreed RUS recommendation.
- 2.2.4. Alliance Rail's proposed services between London and West Yorkshire raise other issues. Although neither was raised as a gap in the WCML RUS, there are no through services between the southern part of the WCML and West Yorkshire stations, or between Stockport and West Yorkshire. Alliance Rail seeks to provide these, but it is debatable whether the granting of rights for the proposed services would optimise the use of scarce capacity in the Manchester area, on the two TransPennine routes and between Manchester and Liverpool. It may hinder or prevent the introduction of additional services proposed in the Northern Hub study. It should be recalled that implementation of the full Northern Hub service package is a recommendation of the Northern RUS, to which Alliance Rail has signed up as a member of the Stakeholder Management Group.
- 2.2.5. WCR250 would seek the ORR's assurance that it will give priority to implementation of the WCML RUS, Northern RUS and Northern Hub study, agreed by cross-industry groups of which Alliance Rail is itself a member.