Feras Alshaker
Head of Access and Licensing

Email: [Redacted]

22 November 2019

Copy list below – ***by email only***

Dear colleague,

Access to the West Coast Main Line (WCML)

1.   We wrote to you on 11 October setting out our planned approach to taking forward several aspirations to run additional services on the WCML, and asking for formal applications by Friday 15 November. This letter is to update you on our process and the applications we have received.

2.   The applications we have received are:

- The new franchisee, First Trenitalia West Coast Rail Limited (FTWC), has applied to us for rights, from December 2022, for additional London Euston-Liverpool Lime St services to increase its service from 1 to 2 per hour;

- Prospective Open Access Operator Virgin Trains (VT) has applied to us for rights, from December 2022, for an hourly return service between London Euston and Liverpool Lime Street calling at Nuneaton, Tamworth, Lichfield Trent Valley and Liverpool South Parkway;

- Prospective Open Access Operator Grand Union Trains (GUT) has applied to us for rights, from May 2021, for 4 return services per day between London Euston and Stirling, calling at Milton Keynes Central, Nuneaton, Crewe, Preston, Carlisle, Lockerbie, Motherwell, Whifflet, Greenfaulds and Larbert;

- Franchisee West Midlands Trains (WMT) has applied to us for rights, from December 2020, to run an additional return service in certain hours between Northampton and London Euston; and

- Existing Open Access Operator Grand Central North West (GCNW) has applied to us to turn the contingent right that it holds to run a fifth service on Wednesday every 8 weeks between London and Blackpool into a firm right.

3.   More information on each of these applications is included in the industry consultations Network Rail has been undertaking[1]. We would encourage you to engage through the industry consultations if you have specific comments on the individual applications.

4.   We have asked Network Rail to carry out an appraisal of WCML capacity and the potential impact on performance that would result from additional services. We have asked Network Rail to consult with industry before finalising the remit for this appraisal for the

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[1] Please see [Network Rail's website](#)

end of the year and we expect them to be in touch with you shortly; please do engage with this process. We have asked Network Rail to share the study with us by the end of February 2020 and we will publish the report on our website.

5.   We will be continuing our economic analysis on the applications, including where applicable undertaking the Economic Equilibrium Test, Not Primarily Abstractive Test and assessing the wider costs and benefits of the possible capacity uses. We will be in touch with individual applicants and other stakeholders where we need specific information to inform our economic analysis.

6.   We take access decisions within 6 weeks of receiving all relevant information; but note that with these competing aspirations, the information we will need in order to reach our decisions may be complex and involve more dialogue with aspirants and stakeholders than usual. In line with EE Test timescales, our decisions on open access applications for May 2021 will need to be taken by August 2020 at the latest.

7.   I hope this is helpful, but please do not hesitate to contact me, Ian Williams or David Reed if you would like to discuss further. We will publish this letter on our website.

Yours sincerely

Feras Alshaker

Copyees

Ian Yeowart (GUT)	Chris Rowley (Network Rail)
Phil Whittingham (VT)	Dan Moore (DfT)
Russell Evans (FTWC)	Helen Robinson (DfT)
Chris Hanks (GCNW)	Martin Purcell (DfT)
James Carter (WMT)	Linda Bennett (Transport Scotland)
Jo Kaye (Network Rail)	John Hillman (EWR)
Paul McMahon (Network Rail)	Transport Focus
Tim Shoveller (Network Rail)	Current WCML operators
Peter Craig (Network Rail)	