



Paul Plummer
Director, Planning and Regulation

40 Melton Street
London NW1 2EE
Tel: 020 7557 9365
Fax: 020 7557 9108
Email: paul.plummer@networkrail.co.uk

Michael Lee
Office of Rail Regulation
One Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN

20 December 2007

Dear Michael

Re: RUS Programme

The RUS programme has developed significantly since I wrote to you on this subject in March and it has now become one of the clear success stories to arise from the 2004 "Future of Rail" White Paper. Five of the nineteen RUSs have become established, three more are approaching final publication and a further seven are now underway. Three of the remaining four will start in January. Most importantly, RUSs are establishing a solid foundation on which to build railway planning in the future. Much of the work has been ground-breaking because of the absence of whole-industry strategic planning during the previous decade; a particular example is the bespoke demand and crowding model developed within the North West RUS, which was fundamental to the case for train lengthening in provincial conurbations that became a core part of the England & Wales HLOS and now the Strategic Business Plan.

This success has been achieved at some cost to the programme itself. Current progress against approved establishment dates is set out in the table below (updated from a table in the recent RIPG paper). Industry participants, however, have been consistently of the view that, where a conflict occurs, (other things being equal) quality should be put before programme.

In some cases of quality/time conflict, other things are not equal and it is appropriate to produce a lower-quality document quickly. For instance, a draft East Coast Main Line RUS was felt to be necessary for the successful franchising of the Inter City East Coast franchise this year (a franchise competition not envisaged when the RUS was started), so a RUS Draft for Consultation was published in a less-developed form than usual but at the appropriate time – in June. The ORR's response to this consultation noted some deficiencies in quality.

RUS	Current establishment date	Current Status (December 2007)
South West Main Line	May 2006	Established
Cross London	October 2006	Established
Scotland	April 2007	Established
Freight	May 2007	Established
North West	June 2007	Established
Greater Anglia	December 2007	Preparing final document
East Coast Main Line	December 2007	Reviewing consultation responses
South London	January 2008	Reviewing consultation responses
Wales	May 2008	Option appraisal
Lancashire & Cumbria	May 2008	Option appraisal
Yorkshire & Humber	March 2008	Option appraisal
Merseyside	September 2008	Gap analysis
Network	April 2009	Underway in four workstreams
Kent	March 2009	Defining scope
Sussex	September 2009	Defining scope
East Midlands	January 2009	Not started
South Midlands	January 2009	Not started
Great Western	September 2009	Not started
West Coast Main Line	January 2009	Not started

Additional resources

Experience has suggested that a conflict between the quality of a RUS and the time taken to develop it cannot be avoided simply by applying more resources to the activity. Firstly, many of the activities are necessarily sequential and the appropriate level of analysis to fulfil the Route Utilisation Objective and comply with the RUS Guidelines cannot be ascertained in advance. So any programme developed before the gap analysis stage of a RUS will be subject to considerable risk. The risk could be mitigated by building contingency time into each RUS's programme, but most stakeholders (and ORR representatives) would prefer a tight programme which could be relaxed when needed through a consultative process. We deliberately did not include a contingency in the original programme, partly to push forward progress as quickly as reasonably practicable and partly in recognition of our discussions about the potential to change the programme in the light of experience. We propose to maintain this approach, and we now have a better understanding of timescales. In addition, we would in future wish to seek approval for any changes at an earlier stage in the process following discussions with other stakeholders including through the Rail Industry Planning Group process. Secondly, the Licence Condition makes it clear that industry participation is critical to the process, so undertaking the activity more intensively puts a considerable burden on the organisations that are interested in many RUSs (such as the larger Freight Operating Companies, DfT and ATOC).

Network Rail resources available for RUS activities are, however, being increased. This is to deliver the programme in as timely a fashion as possible whilst increasing the quality and scope of analysis as sought by funders, stakeholders and ORR. Two

key Network Rail support teams for RUS activity were restructured and expanded earlier this year (Strategic Access Planning and Planning Analysis). Route Planning is now increasing its team by nearly 30% to deliver more comprehensive work on RUSs and Route Plans.

Proposed programme management

Given the context described above, and after discussions between Richard Eccles and John Larkinson, a paper on the RUS Programme was circulated to Rail Industry Planning Group before its meeting on 22 November. The draft minutes of the meeting are attached to this letter at Annex 2. The two relevant actions from the meeting were:

- to seek ORR approval of the revised programme as proposed in the paper, and
- to institute a regular six-monthly review of the programme (which might or might not result in revisions being proposed to ORR), with effect from the next RIPG meeting in January.

I am therefore seeking your approval for the programme changes in the table below, which I have extracted from an annex to the RIPG paper.

RUS	Current establishment date	Proposed establishment date
South West Main Line	May 2006	May 2006
Cross London	October 2006	October 2006
Scotland	April 2007	April 2007
Freight	May 2007	May 2007
North West	June 2007	June 2007
Greater Anglia	December 2007	February 2008
East Coast Main Line	December 2007	April 2008
South London	January 2008	May 2008
Wales	May 2008	October 2008
Lancashire & Cumbria	May 2008	October 2008
Yorkshire & Humber	March 2008	December 2008
Merseyside	September 2008	December 2008
Network	April 2009	April 2009 ¹
Kent	March 2009	September 2009
Sussex	September 2009	September 2009
East Midlands	January 2009	October 2009
South Midlands	January 2009	October 2009
Great Western	September 2009	October 2009
West Coast Main Line	January 2009	December 2009

¹ The Network RUS will produce a number of outputs at different times. Consultation is expected to be bespoke for each, and it is hoped that establishment of each can take place individually.

Annex 1 to this letter contains an analysis of the programme options that were considered, in the context of timing of the potential implementation opportunities for each individual RUS.

Cross-industry support

Finally, I believe it is worth emphasising the strong support from every representative at the RIPG meeting (of course discounting Network Rail and ORR) for the way that RUSs have been developed to date, and for a flexible programme in future that allows time to carry out the activity to a high standard. I felt it was also significant that much of the Group's discussion on RUSs was not about the current process, but about how the process should evolve in the future, after RUSs have become established for the whole network. My Route Planning team is working with your representatives to develop this thinking for your current review of the RUS Guidelines and the 2009 changes to the Licence Conditions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PP Plummer', written in a cursive style.

Paul Plummer