



Rail industry compliance with timetable production milestones

Final June 2024 timetable change data and current
December 2024 timetable change data

23 July 2024



Contents

Context for this release	3
Network Rail and industry roles	3
Train Operator Variation Requests (TOVRs)	3
Note on Network Code milestones	4
June 2024 timetable change	5
D-40 date – Timeliness of passenger and freight operator timetable bids to Network Rail	5
D-26 date – Timeliness of Network Rail providing operators with the timetable	6
D 22 date – Appeals submitted	6
Train Operator Variation Requests (TOVRs)	7
December 2024 timetable change	8
D-40 date – Timeliness of passenger and freight operator timetable bids to Network Rail	8
Next publication of data	9

Context for this release

ORR monitors industry compliance with timetable production timescales by gathering data from Network Rail and train operators on milestones in the [Network Code](#).

This report highlights key findings from our analysis of final data from the June 2024 timetable change. It also takes an initial look at data from the December 2024 timetable change.

Analysis of final data from the December 2023 timetable change, and an initial view of the June 2024 data, is available in our [May 2024 report](#).

Network Rail and industry roles

For details on how the rail industry produces timetables, please see our report on the [timetable development process](#).

Train Operator Variation Requests (TOVRs)

Train and freight operators can request a variation to the base timetable after it is published at 26 weeks before the timetable starts (D-26). This is called a Train Operator Variation request, or 'TOVR'. Network Rail will either accept, reject or modify the request.

Freight operators will often identify space in the timetable and use TOVRs to demonstrate their services can operate without undermining network performance, before applying for contractual rights.

TOVRs are an important part of the timetable production process and can allow capacity to be used effectively. TOVRs provide flexibility in the timetable production process by allowing additional or amended services from passenger and freight operators to be included in the timetable after the base timetable is published.

However, having a high number of TOVRs (passenger or freight) can create instability. TOVRs made within 12 weeks of the timetable entering operation can impact on the release of final timetables to train and freight operators and subsequently passengers.

We are currently collecting data on the total number of TOVRs made by operators. A higher number of TOVRs might suggest more work would be required to finalise the draft timetable. However, as it does not take into account the complexity of each TOVR or the number of services affected, the data is limited in what it can tell us about the impact of

TOVRs on timetable production and information to passengers. We plan to develop our analysis further in future.

Note on Network Code milestones

The timetable development process has not followed the Network Code milestones since the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Consequently, train and freight operating companies and passengers cannot be certain timetable information will be available 12 weeks in advance.

As part of the periodic review 2023 (PR23), we set Network Rail a requirement to return the timetable process to Network Code compliance by December 2024: [PR23 final determination: settlement document for the System Operator](#).

June 2024 timetable change

For 2024 only, the usual May timetable change took place in June, as industry returns to following Network Code milestones after the disruption caused by COVID-19.

The data below is current as of 7 June 2024.

D-40 date – Timeliness of passenger and freight operator timetable bids to Network Rail

- Almost all operators submitted their proposed new timetables (“bid”) in line with the milestones set by Network Rail.
- The D-40 date specified by the Network Code was 25 August 2023. For the June 2024 timetable change, Network Rail asked operators to submit bids by 20 October 2023 (D-32).
- Most operators, 43, submitted bids for the June 2024 timetable change on or before 20 October 2023.
- Southeastern submitted a bid on 20 October but was required to rebid on 3 November 2023. We understand this was because of a change in requirement by its funder.

D-26 date – Timeliness of Network Rail providing operators with the timetable

- Network Rail provided operators with their draft timetables in line with the agreed milestones.
- The D-26 date specified by the Network Code was 1 December 2023. For the June 2024 timetable, Network Rail worked towards a revised date of 29 December 2023 (D-22).
- All operators that submitted final bids by 20 October 2023 received their timetable on 29 December 2023.
- Govia Thameslink Railway submitted a revised bid on 29 December 2023 and received its timetable on the same day.
- Southeastern submitted a revised bid on 24 January and received its timetable on 29 January 2024.
- Revisions to a bid between the original bid date and provision of the timetable (revised access proposals) are an expected part of the timetable development process. The revisions listed did not raise any concerns for Network Rail.
- We will continue to monitor the submission of revised access proposals and work with Network Rail and operators to understand the reasons for them.

D 22 date – Appeals submitted

- 26 operators appealed the draft June 2024 timetable by the 12 January deadline, and all of these appeals were progressed.
- This is an increase compared to the December 2023 timetable, when only four operators appealed by the 14 July 2023 deadline, and only three of these appeals were progressed.

Train Operator Variation Requests (TOVRs)

- A total of 1,935 Train Operator Variation Requests (TOVRs) were made in the 26 weeks before the June 2024 timetable came into operation, compared to 1,189 for December 2023.
- 87% of TOVRs for June 2024 were requested by freight operators, and most freight operator TOVRs were made less than 12 weeks prior to the timetable going live.
- We (and industry) expect freight operators to have a high number of TOVRs because of their business model, which relies on identifying and bidding for unused capacity in the base timetable. Nonetheless, TOVRs can introduce complexity in finalising the timetable.
- Of the passenger operators, TransPennine Express and ScotRail had the highest number of TOVRs for the June 2024 timetable change. These two operators also had more TOVRs than other passenger operators for the December 2023 timetable change.
- Passenger operators continue to make a significant proportion of their TOVRs in the last 12 weeks before the timetable change:
 - For June 2024, 163 passenger operator TOVRs were made within 12 weeks of the timetable change (68% of the total).
 - For December 2023, 127 passenger operator TOVRs were made within 12 weeks of the timetable change (77% of the total).

December 2024 timetable change

We expect timetable processes for the December 2024 timetable change to be compliant with the Network Code milestones. Early indications are that operators and Network Rail are meeting the required deadlines.

The data below is current as of 3 May 2024.

D-40 date – Timeliness of passenger and freight operator timetable bids to Network Rail

- The D-40 date specified by the Network Code was 8 March 2024.
- Most operators, 40, submitted bids for the December 2024 timetable change on or before 8 March 2024.
- Eurostar, which operates on the HS1 network, submitted its bid on 28 March 2024. This was before the date specified by the HS1 Network Code (5 April 2024, D-36).
- As of 3 May 2024, revised access proposals had been received from four operators: East Midlands Railway, LNER, Northern Trains and TransPennine Express.

Next publication of data

Final data for the December 2024 timetable change will be published [on the ORR website](#) in early 2025, along with an initial look at data for the May 2025 timetable change.

Updated data tables and charts will also be available.



© Crown copyright 2024

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at orr.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at orr.gov.uk/contact-us

