



## **ASLEF Response to Yorkshire Route Utilisation Strategy – December 2008**

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and Overground and the light rail sector.
2. ASLEF welcomes many of the programmes laid out in the Yorkshire Route Utilisation Strategy and firmly believes that continued investment into the Yorkshire transport infrastructure is essential for both the development of the transport system in the region as well the development of the economy.
3. The union is concerned that Yorkshire receives less expenditure per head on transport than most of the UK's regions and believes that the Yorkshire network is urgently in need of modernisation and development and should receive the appropriate funds to do so.
4. We believe there are areas that require greater focus, such as greater electrification of the network in the region. While we accept that some routes within the Yorkshire area are electrified, the overall amount of electrified lines is poor in comparison to other areas. Therefore in terms of energy efficiency, cutting carbon emissions and creating a more reliable railway, electrification should be a priority.
5. ASLEF welcomes the strategy's acknowledgement of the positive effects that electrification can have on the railways but is disappointed that practical steps to this effect are limited. The RUS explains in reference to the Airedale Line that, "Since electrification in the mid-1990s the route has experienced considerable

passenger growth.” Surely such evidence provides evidence for greater investment in this regard

6. It also explains that electrification between Huddersfield and Standedge “would bring benefits in terms of faster acceleration from stations and would significantly improve the performance of services over the hilly sections of the route.” Similar benefits are detailed for the possible electrification of the lines between Leeds and Micklefield. Yet the RUS speaks of electrification in terms of a possibility.
7. ASLEF agrees with the RUS that electrification brings a vast array of benefits, and the union believes that there should be greater boldness and decisiveness on this vital infrastructure question.
8. ASLEF is concerned that whilst the strategy does talk of the need for capacity enhancements, it underestimates precisely the level required. Since 1995-96 train journey’s that begin, end or are within Yorkshire have gone up by 79.3% and the Strategy states that 21% of peak AM services into Leeds have more passengers than the theoretical seating and standing capacity of the rolling stock. This is not only an issue in regards to passenger comfort, but also creates problems regarding health and safety.
9. ASLEF agrees that increasing line speeds is a sensible way to improve capacity. It is essential that this is done in full consultation with drivers and that track is in suitable conditions for such increases.
10. There are clearly corridors that need capacity enhancement such as the Leeds – Scarborough/Hull corridor which would benefit not only passenger services but also freight capacity. If passenger numbers are to increase between 28% and 47% over the next 11 years many of these already overcrowded services will not be able to cope with the numbers.
11. Whilst many of the changes suggested such as timetable adjustments may help in the short term, the reality is that only genuine capacity enhancement will

create an infrastructure that can cope with an increase in passengers. This means increased rolling stock and longer platforms to cope with the longer trains.

12. ASLEF believes that major upgrade work in the Doncaster area is essential. As detailed in the RUS, “the Doncaster station area needs to be examined not only in the context of the freight growth above but for the longer-term increase in passenger services from London King’s Cross to the RUS area, the North-East and Scotland, and for other service improvement aspirations in the Yorkshire and Humber Region.” The union believes that such work would have a positive effect of the whole region and also for both freight and passenger transport and therefore feel this work should be treated as a priority.

13. In times when as a nation we seek to reduce our carbon emissions and reduce road congestion, rail freight has become ever more important. This makes infrastructure works that allow for the growth of rail freight not just important, but essential. Therefore gauge enhancement to W9, W10 and W12, to allow train lengths up to 775 metres is vital. A loop of 775 metres would also be a welcome development.

14. ASLEF believes that the construction of a dedicated freight line from London to Scotland through the Yorkshire would be a great benefit to the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Not only would this create far greater freight capacity, but it would also relieve many other lines, freeing capacity for passenger services. In addition, without slower freight services, passenger services would be able to travel at faster speeds. This would not only improve journey times, but once again increase capacity. A huge variety of freight travels throughout the whole of the Yorkshire and Humberside region and facilitating this freight to travel by rail would prevent road congestion, boost the regions economy and reduce freight carbon emissions.

15. ASLEF is concerned that investment in transport in the Yorkshire and Humberside region is falling behind the rest of the country. In 2007-08,

expenditure on transport per head was just £245. The UK average was £341 per head. This demonstrates that the works identified are long overdue in the region.

## **Conclusion**

16. ASLEF is happy to see a detailed plan of investment, renewals and enhancements to rail in Yorkshire. However the union believes that a bolder vision is needed. Passenger numbers have increased by 79.3% in the region since privatisation while rolling stock and infrastructure improvements have failed to keep pace. With a greater number of people commuting in to the economic hubs in the region such as Leeds and Sheffield, numerous stations require lengthening and more track needs to be laid.

17. The Government strongly supports greater electrification of the network. ASLEF firmly believes that a program of electrification would not only reduce carbon emissions from Yorkshire's rail but also improve acceleration times, ensure trains could stop at smaller station thereby providing more services to more people.

18. Passenger numbers show that there is an increasing demand for rail use in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. At a time when we are calling on people to leave their cars at home and take public transport, it is essential that rail transport is made as attractive an option as possible. This is not the case if "of the 92 train services that arrive in Leeds during the AM peak in the 2007 timetable an estimated 45 have more passengers than seats available, and around 19 have more passengers than the theoretical seating and standing capacity of the rolling stock." It is vital that the industry is able to match people's desire to travel by train.

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