



Rail North Strategy Consultation

There are nine sections to complete. Eight are about the strategy; the final section is about you.

Vision

Q1A. The five priorities of the Long Term Rail Strategy are:

- Better connectivity
- Better customer experience
- Efficiency
- Being locally responsive
- Deriving full value from planned investments

Do you agree that these are the correct priorities? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q1B. Are there any other priorities that are important?

Passenger value for money, increasing modal share for rail freight, greater reliability and punctuality and increased capacity should also be key priorities.

Q2. Recognising that it has to be achievable, is the Vision for rail in the North sufficiently ambitious?

The vision is very dependent on what central Government decides to do in regards to combining the franchises and decentralisation. Ultimately, ASLEF supports decentralisation and devolution, but in the context of a single publically owned rail operator. It is then that the true benefits of local control can come to fruition. Unless this happens, there is a danger of this simply leading to more fragmentation which in turn leads to inefficiencies, one of the few areas with which ASLEF agreed with the McNulty report Therefore ASLEF broadly supports the concept on a combined rail strategy for the north through devolution, but only if this is done in a unifying manner and with passengers and taxpayers being the priority rather than shareholders.



Economic & social context

Q3. Do you agree that the relationship between economic growth and rail is correct? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q4. Are there any other factors that need to be considered?

It should also be noted that according to figures quoted by Credo Group for Invensys Rail, every £1 invested in rail by the government generates an additional £1.30 from the private sector – in other words investment in transport has a stronger multiplier effect than other sectors of the economy.

Additionally, the effect of increasing the amount of freight that goes on to rail and the reduction of congestion cannot be underestimated in relation to the North's economy.

Road congestion is believed to cost businesses £24 billion per annum. The DfT estimate the cost of congestion being £1 per lorry miles on the most congested roads. Considering that the average freight train can remove 60 HGVs journeys from our roads, the economic benefit of rail freight must also be highlighted.

Rail in the North

Q5. Do you agree with the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the North's rail provision? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q6. Are there any other issues that are important?

ASLEF broadly agree. The area covered by the strategy is so large, that outside of the unique provision of rail in London, the strengths and weaknesses of rail in the north are very much the strengths and weaknesses of rail across the country. This strategy covers an area with inter-regional services, regional services and suburban and city services.

The biggest problem in terms of provision is clearly capacity due to forecasted increases in demand. The demand of both passenger services and freight services must be considered together. Both run off the same tracks and an increase in services of one when the network is at capacity, would mean a reduction in the other. This must not be allowed to happen. ASLEF are therefore pleased that the strategy is taking this issue seriously and has pointed out that by



2029 there will be an increase of 50% in demand for passenger services in the North and in 20 years 100% growth in freight lifted nationally.

ASLEF would urge caution in terms of consideration of the McNulty Study of Rail Value for Money. The study pointed out that fragmentation was a major force in pushing costs up on the railway, something ASLEF agree with. But it then went on to recommend further fragmentation. ASLEF believe that alliancing between Network Rail and TOCs could have a damaging effect on the rail network. ASLEF is concerned that an alliance with a TOC would introduce an element of profit making back into the maintenance of our rail infrastructure and would also mean yet more fragmentation. This may in fact lead to a series of mini Railtracks. The union therefore believes it essential that infrastructure remains under the control of one not-for-profit organisation. There is also a concern that should the franchise winner join in an alliance with Network Rail to run the line, they will prioritise their passenger services over freight services.

In terms of subsidy, ASLEF see the railways as creating benefits for wider society, not just for individual passengers. The Union therefore has no problems with the principle of the railway being subsidised. It should be remembered that roads are heavily subsidised from general taxation. The problem comes however, when taxpayers subsidise companies that are not truly profitable yet still take money from the industry in terms of dividends to shareholders. If the taxpayer is having to inject money into the industry in order for it to fulfil an important economic and social task, profiteers should not then be allowed to remove it to line pockets. The nature of many services in the north of England means that many will never be profitable as entities. However that does not mean they are less valuable to communities and the individuals that use them.

The region also has some of the oldest rolling stock in Britain. For reasons of efficiency, comfort, disability access, value for money and attracting more people to the railway, this must change. It is unacceptable that we still run “pacers” which are based on a bus design and were intended as a short terms solution in the mid 80’s.

ASLEF fully support the creation of an electric spine for rail freight

Q7. Is the balance between passenger and freight appropriate?

Rail Freight is too often the forgotten and most neglected aspect of the rail network. Often because passengers can vote and rail freight cannot, it is not given the consideration it needs.



This is despite the significant but less direct benefit to the public of taking more freight on rail. ASLEF is therefore glad that there is a focus on the industry in this document.

Gap analysis

Q8. Are the strategic gaps identified the right ones? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q9. Are there any strategic gaps missing?

ASLEF are extremely concerned about the documents suggestion of using more Driver Only Operation services (DOO) in order to increase efficiency. There appears to be a contradiction within the document. It mentions the perceived poor security and personal safety when traveling by train. Yet it suggests an increase in DOO. Removing staff from trains will prevent many of the more vulnerable members of our communities using services at certain time of the day. Not only is it bad for society that anyone should feel it is too unsafe to use our railway, it could well be counterproductive financially. If people stop using services because there is no staff member on board, ticket revenue could fall and efficiency would in fact reduce. For this reason ASLEF strongly opposes any extension of DOO.

The issue of insufficient capacity cannot be underestimated. We are currently approaching capacity for both passenger and freight services. With significant growth forecasted for both, it is of paramount importance that this issue is dealt with.

Q10. Are there any specific geographic issues which should be highlighted for the longer term?

ASLEF feels is extremely important that HS2 comes to the North as soon as possible and continues through to Scotland. Only then will the region get the full benefit of the new line.

Outputs & benefits assessment

Q11. Has the right set of outputs been identified to deliver the Strategy objectives? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / No

Q12. Are there any other outputs that need to be considered?



ASLEF is extremely concerned by the plans comments on fares. The plan acknowledges that passengers feel that fares are far too high and that they do not represent value for money. Yet it states that rather than reducing fares, we must simply increase the perception of value for money. ASLEF feels that passengers simply want services that are fast, reliable, and comfortable with the ability to sit if journeys are long. There is very little room to manoeuvre in increasing the perceived value for money of a train ticket without actually reducing fares. Britain continues to have the most expensive train tickets in Europe whilst we allow money to be taken out of the industry in profit. Year after year of inflation busting fare increases must end before train travel becomes a service that only the well-off can afford.

Q13. Is the focus on connectivity to and between key centres, to London and to international gateways right? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q14. Are there other priorities?

Q15. How important is electrification? (please delete as appropriate)

~~Very important~~

~~Important~~

~~Not that important~~

~~Not important at all~~

Q16. Should the focus be on better quality of service, irrespective of how trains are powered? (please delete as appropriate) ~~Yes~~ / No

ASLEF firmly believes that it is electrification that will ultimately bring a better quality of service. Spending money on other elements of the service whilst not electrifying it simply papering over the cracks.

Q17. Is there sufficient consideration of freight?

As previously mentioned, ASLEF is pleased with the amount of consideration that is given to Freight. Too often, freight is not given the same consideration as passenger services. When it comes down to implementation, the Union hopes that this consideration continues.



Implementation

Q18. Is the focus on service categories right?

ASLEF believes that this focus could be of use.

Q19. What needs to happen to make this a reality?

ASLEF believes that to achieve many of these outputs, we must invest to electrify the rail network in the north. HS2 must come to the north and continue into Scotland. Additionally we must see no profit motive creeping into infrastructure of the UK and must roll back the profit motive in our operators. We must not let money leave the industry that could be used to improve and invest in services or to reduce fares.

Q20. Is the strategic programme the right one? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Q21. Are the right issues allocated to the right time periods?

The issue around capacity is extremely pressing so all undertakings to deal with this must happen as soon as possible.

Q22. Is the balance between passenger and freight in the strategic programme right?

Yes.

Q23. Are the right delivery agencies and potential funders identified? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / No

Q24. Are there others which should be referenced?

It is simply not right that so much funding should come from public bodies to improve infrastructure that will financially benefit private companies who run the TOCs. ASLEF believes



that if funding should come from the taxpayer, the benefits created should not be used to line shareholders pockets.

Appendix: Proposed fares regime

Q25. Is the current fares regime fit for purpose? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / No

Q26. What changes could be made to the current fares regime?

The fare system should be simplified and people should not be punished for needing to buy tickets on the day of travel. Fares are far too high and complicated and the fare system should acknowledge that people are not always able to book specific trains in advance. Additionally, more flexible season ticket options should be made available for part time workers. This would especially benefit women who are more likely to work part time.

Any other comments?

Q27. If there are any other comments you wish to make about the Strategy, please enter them below.

We welcome much of Rail North strategy. But our rail network is a national network. Therefore this strategy must be part of an on-going and long term national plan. We must not allow the network to become more fragmented and allow differing standards of service throughout the regions of the UK. ASLEF therefore calls on Rail North to work with the other regions and stakeholders such as transport unions to ensure that this is part of a long term vision for the UK railway. Our network has suffered chronic underinvestment in the past and we are now paying the price for this. We must not allow this situation to arise again in the future.



About you

Finally, we'd like to know a bit more about you.

P1. Please type your postcode: **EC1M 4NN**

P2. If you are completing this questionnaire on behalf of an organisation, please tell us who.

ASLEF

P3. If you would like us to contact you after this consultation ends, please give us your email address or postal address. Please note that we will only use this information in relation to the Long-Term Rail Strategy - it will not be used for any other purpose by Rail North partners, nor will your email address be passed on to third parties.

dgould@aslef.org.uk

P4. Rail North would like to publish consultation responses alongside the revised strategy document.

Do you agree to let us include your responses? (please delete as appropriate) Yes / ~~No~~

Thank you for completing our questionnaire.

The consultation is open until Monday 21 October 2013, with the results published later in the year.