

GB Railfreight

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Hearing Chair
Access Disputes Committee
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Dear Tony,

Directions letter of 29 August 2017

Movements from Tonbridge West Yard

Regarding the question of trains leaving Tonbridge West Yard, the following should explain the layout at this location.

There are 20 lines in Tonbridge West Yard, comprising the "South Fan" – lines 0 to 8 – accessed by the Marshalling Yard South line, and the "North Fan" – lines 9 to 19 – accessed by the Marshalling Yard North line.

Signal AD2059 controls movements leaving the Marshalling Yard South line and has 3 routes into Tonbridge station: to AD157 on the Down Fast, AD159 on the Up Slow (Platform 2) and AD161 on the Up Loop (Platform 1).

Signal AD2061 controls movements leaving the Marshalling Yard North line and has 1 route into Tonbridge station, to AD157 on the Down Fast only.

GBRF's lease area is in the North Fan, lines 11 to 15, and is therefore only accessible to and from the Down Fast line. GBRF's maintenance activities are carried out within its lease area and we believe it is reasonable to be able to depart directly from the North Fan in conjunction with our Connection Agreement.

A signalling plan is attached for your convenience, although this is difficult to print and is best viewed on screen.

Other services via AD2032

There is currently one service planned to depart via AD2061 to the Down Fast and AD157 to the Down Slow, and then reverse behind AD2032 before proceeding towards Sevenoaks via platform 3. This is 6Y39 04:30 MO Tonbridge to Grain, and is underpinned by firm access rights which specifically mention AD2032 as an Intermediate Point in the current Schedule 5. The application for firm rights was consulted with Kent Route as part of the regular internal Network Rail consultation process and no adverse comments were received.

Safety considerations

With regard to the safety issues raised by Network Rail, the RSSB "Working Manual for Rail Staff: Freight Train Operations" (GO/RT3056), also known as the "The White Pages" (as part of the Rule Book), permits an operator to carry out a propelling movement on a track circuit block line that is not required to proceed beyond more than one main aspect signal. Tonbridge West Yard and station area falls into this category.

It is permitted by Network Rail to shunt without a member of ground staff preceding the move, as has currently been authorised elsewhere on the Network, and Parkeston and Harlow Mill are two examples of locations where this takes place.

Most importantly, it is the responsibility of GB Railfreight to ensure that a safe movement takes place, and this can be under the directions of the Rule Book or a derogation to it. There are many such derogations in operation currently to assist with the specific local circumstances applicable.

The basis of this dispute is the legal entitlements of the Part D process and no other; the point here is that it is GB Railfreight's responsibility to ensure safety before the train runs, and not Network Rail's ability to reject a bid on that basis.

Pathing of 6Y41

With regard to 6Y71 and 6Y88, both moves are identical other than one uses Platform 1 and the other Platform 2. Both have to use the South Fan and AD2059 to depart Tonbridge West Yard, with the additional measures and resource that means for GB Railfreight to ensure they are on the correct line for departure. AD2059 signal is cleared and then AD161 (in the case of Platform 1) or AD159 (in the case of Platform 2), usually towards the Down Hastings line. It is not important whether the AD2059 signal or the platform-end signal is cleared first as both have to be clear before the shunter can permit the train to pass AD2059. As soon as the locomotive at the rear of the train is clear inside of AD154 (Platform 1) or AD152 (Platform 2), the route can be reset towards Sevenoaks.

Network Rail attempted to use the same routes when processing 6Y41, but the following illustrates the processes GB Railfreight undertook to find a path and why this is not possible. This starts with the general situation in off-peak hours and then moves onto the specific hour into which 6Y41 was bid.

Platform 2 has 6 movements per hour towards Sevenoaks, and is occupied as follows:

xx:00 - xx:01 Tunbridge Wells to Charing Cross

xx:07½ - xx:09 Dover Priory to Charing Cross

xx:18 - xx:19 Hastings to Charing Cross

xx:30 - xx:31 Tunbridge Wells to Charing Cross

xx:37½ - xx:39 Ramsgate to Charing Cross via Canterbury West

xx:48 - xx:49 Hastings to Charing Cross

n.b. there are minor variations in some hours

Given that the platform reoccupation and junction margins at Tonbridge are 3 minutes and a train propelling from the West Yard (before reversing) requires a 2-minute dwell in the station, a minimum

gap between trains of 8 minutes is required. Therefore the only windows of opportunity to reverse in Platform 2 are:

Arrive	Depart	Remarks
xx:12	xx:14	Not possible to depart later*
xx:22	xx:24	Slot does not work on the approach to Orpington**
xx:42	xx:44	Not possible to depart later*
xx:52	xx:54	Slot does not work on the approach to Orpington**

*There are departures at xx:17 and xx:47 from Platform 3 towards Hastings; as the reversing freight continues past AD159 signal due to its length, the Down Hastings line is also occupied. Applying the standard 3-minute junction margin, the freight would need to depart at xx:14 or xx:44 in order to be TPR-compliant and not delay the departure towards Hastings. If that were not the case, a later departure would not work as the freight would be run down at Grove Park by the next Up Hastings service. It would be unable to switch to the Slow line at any earlier point as no TPR-compliant junction margin is possible.

**A 60mph, 600t freight train departing Tonbridge at xx:24 would pass Sevenoaks at xx:34. However the stopping service to Charing Cross departs Sevenoaks at xx:34 so the freight would incur 3 minutes' pathing time to pass at xx:37. The stopping service arrives at Orpington at xx:47½, so the freight would have to follow at xx:50½. However the following service from Tunbridge Wells (that leaving Tonbridge at xx:39) arrives at Orpington at xx:51, so the freight is run down by the Tunbridge Wells service and there is no path. The same applies on the opposite half hour.

For much of the day, the London end of Platform 1 is occupied by Southern's Victoria to Tonbridge service, which terminates at xx:39 past each hour and departs at xx:19 past the following hour. Additionally, the hourly service from Strood arrives at xx:55 and departs at xx:04 from the country end of the platform. A freight train from Tonbridge West Yard towards Sevenoaks could therefore reverse in Platform 1 between xx:22 and xx:36 and stay clear of the Southern service. As we have seen above, there is no point departing in front of the Tunbridge Wells service that departs Tonbridge at xx:31. Hence the only option is to follow it, departing at xx:34½ on the minimum headway (when following a stopping train) of 3½ minutes. However, on reaching Sevenoaks there is only a 4½-minute gap between the Tunbridge Wells service departing and the following Ramsgate service arriving, so again there is no path and use of platform 1 is prevented for much of the day.

Turning to the specific hour of the bid, alternative paths could be 15:12-15:14 or 15:42-15:44 in Platform 2. However the 15:12 to 15:14 slot is not available due to GBRf's 6072 Colnbrook to Tonbridge service propelling from the Down Fast Line to the West Yard at 15:14, which cannot be moved as it is already on minimum margins with other services. Similarly, 30 minutes later, a conflict would arise with GBRf's 6Y21 East Peckham to Tonbridge service for which identical circumstances apply.

Extending the search further, attempting to depart at 14:44 would result in a path as far as Grove Park, but then a clash arises with 5U94 Victoria to Grove Park at Lee Spur Jn. Were that not the case, Hoo Junction would be reached at 16:00 but the Grain branch is occupied until 16:25 by DB Cargo's 0Y08 and there is nowhere to hold 6Y41. There are no earlier slots on the Grain branch for several hours.

Attempting to depart at 16:14 also fails due to 5W87 15:22 Ashford to Cannon Street using the available gap at Sevenoaks. Any later departure would not be possible due to the evening peak passenger service taking up all the capacity.

Therefore, it is largely the design of the timetable structure that severely limits the options for pathing freight trains; any attempt to introduce additional or more restrictive rules of any kind can only make the situation worse unless the passenger service were to be substantially redesigned in order to provide for adequate opportunity for all users of the railway.

Although ostensibly the move via the Down Fast and AD2032 has more potential for conflict, it is in fact easier to achieve within the current structure of the timetable. The only use of a platform is to pass through Platform 3 when heading towards Sevenoaks, and the reversal can be done on the Down Slow line on the country side of the station which sees little planned use during the day.

Yours sincerely,

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