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Dear Paul,

Following our meeting on the 01st of December, I write to advise Network Rail's position with regard to the Sunday morning access in the Weeks 9-12 CPPP and subsequently to some of the issues raised against the 13-16 CPPP.

First Capital Connect disputed the CPPPs due to the impact of the combination of access being taken on the ECML on Sunday mornings, and I note there has been some concern raised with regard to the timescales at which some of these possessions and been proposed.

With respect to access for the Hitchin Grade Separation, an access footprint was developed with First Capital Connect to primarily affect midweek night services and avoid disruption to weekends. This access footprint heavily constrained the Cambridge branch and ECML on midweek nights, and as such, Network Rail took the decision not to publish the access in the EAS, preferring instead to replan the access footprint into a more supportable format after the EAS process, affecting fewer services over a greater period of time on Sunday mornings whilst still achieving the commissioning for the December 13 timetable change.

As you will be aware, Network Rail published a decision within Version 2 of the rules to undertake the Finsbury Park and Alexandra Palace enhancements in longer possessions over fewer weekends, which was withdrawn in favour of delivering in more weekends of shorter durations, a decision both East Coast and First Capital Connect supported.

The access for the Hertford North Integration Facility has been published within EAS timescales.

The resulting affect of these changes, which have been driven through industry consultation, is a series of enhancement projects supported by the industry that require frequent disruptive access on Sunday mornings. This is also the only period that Network Rail can undertake many of its maintenance and renewal activities on the East Coast Main Line due to the nature of the timetable in place in the midweek. These works and the intended staging and commissioning for the projects, coupled with the added dating and planning constraint of the Olympics in the 2012 timetable has resulted in access being required for these enhancement projects simultaneously on some Sundays.

First Capital Connect have indicated to Network Rail that the combination of access for Cambridge Jn renewals, the Hitchin Grade Separation and the Finsbury Park & Alexandra Palace enhancement schemes in the CPPP for Weeks 9-12 can be supported, and dispute withdrawn, on provision of 2 up and 2 down services from c. 0700 Sunday between Cambridge and New Barnet via Royston and Stevenage. I regret that I must advise that this request cannot be accommodated. Reducing the access footprint for the follow up regime at Cambridge Jn to facilitate such a route is not possible without bringing further access into the plan on midweek nights to remove the settling speed over the junction in advance of the Olympics. Network Rail do not believe that the provision of these 4 services outweighs the impact of midweek night disruption for the follow up campaign on both First Capital Connect and freight operators, or the imposition of a speed restriction over the Olympic period on Cambridge Jn. This has been looked at extensively, and I write with this advice taking into account the easements Network Rail have recently facilitated to the follow up regime with a view to accommodating heavy passenger flows anticipated by First Capital Connect for events in the Stevenage area in Weeks 13 and 15.

First Capital Connect have advised Network Rail that midweek follow up access is not preferable to the running of early Sunday morning services, and as such, I advise that Network Rail's decisions as contained within the respective CPPP documentation remain.

I am conscious that there are a few issues raised against the CPPP for Weeks 13-16 which do not relate to the combination of Sunday morning access. I will aim to have responses with you and your team to these issues by the end of this week (20th January).

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Kind Regards,

Toby Patrick-Bailey
Lead Access Planner