

Periodic Review 2013 – Network Rail consultation on the capacity charge



Public Transport Consortium response to Consultation on the Capacity Charge

The Public Transport Consortium is an all-party special interest group of the Local Government Association representing the public transport interests of shire and unitary authorities in England and Wales.

Many authorities are seeking to develop the use of rail services, and growth is being delivered through Community Rail Partnerships and by achieving increased patronage, often utilising spare capacity on less well used parts of the rail network.

It is therefore essential that any proposed changes do not discourage local authorities from seeking to develop existing rail services by increasing the cost, particularly as services can be developed on an experimental basis – it would be regrettable if service enhancements became unaffordable due to the Capacity charge.

It seems illogical that Network Rail derives a greater income from the capacity charge than Variable Track Access payments.

Working in partnership with the Local Government Association as a Special Interest Group



It is acknowledged that more intensive use of the network can increase delays, although this should be managed, and is unlikely to affect, to any great extent, the rail services that local authorities would seek to develop, as these are unlikely to have any significant impact on performance. Operating a more intensive service need not reduce performance and Train Operating Companies should ensure this is the case. Most services developed with local authority support will only have a single train operating company.

It seems clear that a fundamental review is appropriate – would some other mechanism be more appropriate to avoid discouraging the growth of rail services.

Local authorities seek to develop a greater role in the specification and funding of rail services and this is supported in the Rail Decentralisation consultation document. Therefore this issue will be of growing importance.

Further dialogue is appropriate on this issue to understand the implications and an opportunity to discuss this issue further could be the Network Rail Regional and Local Government Conference in Birmingham on Wednesday 5 December 2012.