

East Coast Main Line Route Study: Consultation Responses Document



The East Coast Main Line Route Study was published as a draft for consultation at the end of 2017. In it, Network Rail set out the strategic direction for the East Coast Main Line (ECML) railway over the coming decades. This work was carried out in partnership with colleagues from across the rail industry and infrastructure planning communities. It was based on extensive economic forecasting, and a consideration of the impacts of economic growth on the demand for rail.

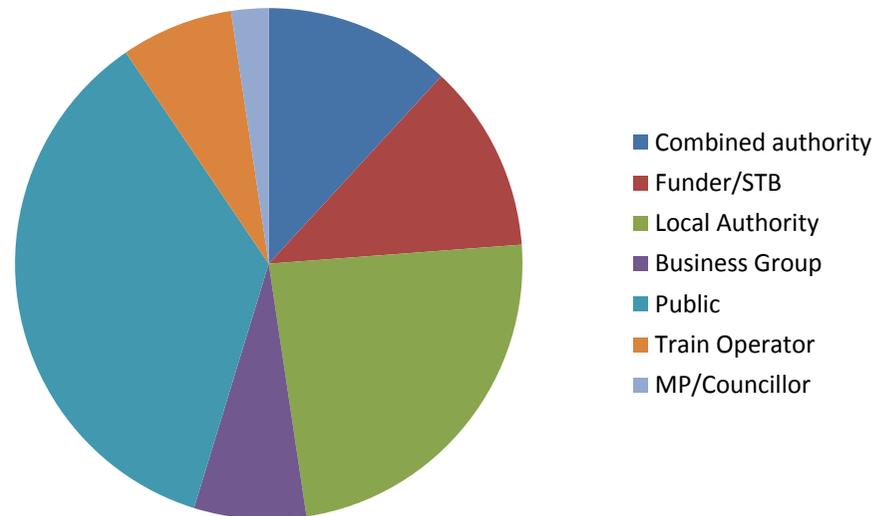
Following a period of public consultation on the Route Study, Network Rail has received over forty responses from rail industry partners, the infrastructure planning community, politicians, and members of the public. The range of insight and quality of the responses is marked, and we take this as an indication of the importance of the ECML railway to people across the UK. The authors thank all who took the time and effort to respond, and while it is not possible to reply to all respondents, individual comments will be fed into future development activity.

To capture the sort of feedback received, and to focus the next steps for developing the strategy for the ECML, we have drawn together a summary of the key themes that the consultation raised, and also a summary of how those themes will be addressed.

The ECML Route Study was produced as part of the rail industry Long Term Planning Process. This process has evolved in recent months with the aim of being more agile and responsive to stakeholder needs and priorities. Whereas in the past, Route Studies would be published on a five year cycle, the industry is moving to a continuous strategic planning approach where strategic questions and opportunities can be addressed at any time, and fed into a pipeline of potential enhancements. As a result, the themes and priorities that have been raised through the Route Study consultation will be taken forward into this ongoing process, with a focus on refining strategic questions and business cases.

This will allow stakeholders to continue to shape the direction of development for the ECML railway, and to help shape compelling business cases for the changes that they want to see happen on the railway.

Chart showing distribution of responses by organisation



In the core Route Study documentation, a strategy for growth was established and detailed; applying this strategy to the current state of the network resulted in the identification of a number of potential interventions that would result in an enhanced network that could offered greater transport capabilities.

These interventions were presented as investment choices that could be developed further where there was an appetite to do so.

Consultation Responses Grouped by Theme

Theme 1: Strategy and Investment Choices	
Consultation Response	Feedback and Next Steps
The strategy for growth is too high level; it should include specific steps that will be implemented on the ECML route.	<p>Network Rail, in collaboration with its industry partners has set out an overall strategy that will allow the railway to grow in a sustainable way, as a whole network.</p> <p>Enhancement options that align to the strategy are developed in consultation with stakeholders. Whether or not to take those options forward for delivery is a choice for funders</p> <p>In this way, priorities and business cases can be focussed on what local stakeholders and beneficiaries want to achieve from rail services, and they can do so knowing that individual changes contribute to an overall joined up strategic direction.</p>
Some investment options should have been given a higher priority and targeted for delivery sooner than others.	<p>Some prioritisation was applied to investment choices; however, this focussed on those schemes needed to meet forecast demand on existing services, rather than options that would provide broader or less defined economic benefits.</p> <p>Taking investment options forward for further development and prioritisation will be done through continued collaboration with stakeholders and beneficiaries to jointly develop compelling business cases that can target funding.</p>
Clear choices have been identified and respondents express an interest in working with Network Rail to develop business cases further.	A new more responsive strategic planning process has been put in place to develop stakeholder priorities. This is underway, and ECML stakeholders are being consulted to further understand strategic needs .

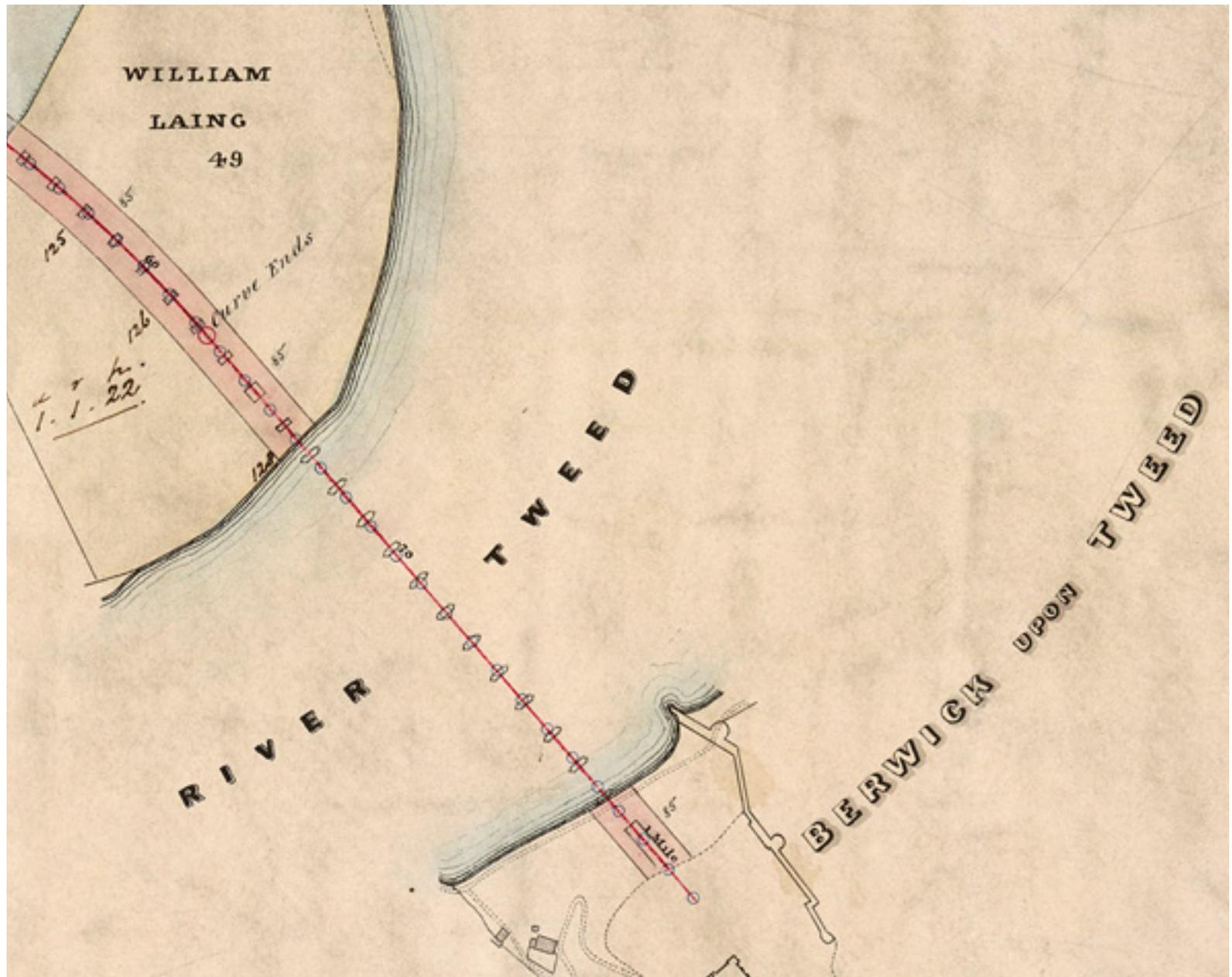
Theme 2: Alignment with Wider Rail Strategies	
Consultation Response	Feedback and Next Steps
<p>The ECML Route Study needs to align more closely with other rail and transport strategies.</p>	<p>In the period leading up to publication of the Route Study, and during the consultation period, a number of transport and economic strategies that intersect with the ECML have been published, or are soon to be.</p> <p>This reflects the successful progress made in devolving responsibility for transport strategy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport for London • Midlands Connect • Transport for the North <p>and to combined authorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority • Sheffield City Region • West Yorkshire Combined Authority • Tees Valley Combined Authority • North East Combined Authority <p>While the Route Study represents a point in time, the ongoing strategic planning work that will feed out of it will provide further opportunities to align with current and emerging stakeholder priorities, strategies and evidence. Network Rail looks forward to progressing this activity with strategic partners.</p>
<p>The demand forecasts used in the Route Study are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too optimistic • Not optimistic enough • Not current enough 	<p>The ECML Route Study was based on economic demand forecasting carried out at an industry level in 2013¹. Since then, governments and devolved transport bodies have refined the way that strategic planning is carried out, and have commissioned a number of new economic forecasts based on a range of methodologies.</p> <p>The economic assumptions used in the Route Study will remain those used to date. The way that the Route Study was undertaken means that options that reflect incremental growth right through to step change growth have been developed.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that as strategic planning activities continue with industry partners, opportunities will arise to revise demand assumptions in the context of specific areas and business cases. These will be carried out on a case by case basis through dialogue with funders and stakeholders.</p>

¹ <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/long-term-planning/>

Theme 3: Geographic Scope and Emphasis	
Consultation Response	Feedback and Next Steps
<p>The Route Study didn't include railway geography that is an important part of the network that links with the ECML</p>	<p>When Route Studies were being developed, decisions were taken to focus them on specific geographies that aligned with service patterns and Network Rail organisational boundaries.</p> <p>In completing the Route Studies, Network Rail integrates the assumptions and outcomes across the network using cross boundary analysis and stakeholder working groups. In this way each Route Study is able to reference the priorities and outputs of its neighbours.</p> <p>However, in transitioning into a strategic planning process that is more agile and focussed on local outcomes, opportunities now arise to combine elements of earlier studies and to shape strategic planning priorities on more flexible geographies.</p>
<p>The Route Study didn't focus in enough detail on a particular section of railway.</p>	<p>While much effort was made to treat each section of the ECML equally, based on the analysis and growth strategy, it is recognised that some areas will require more analysis to shape priorities further.</p> <p>The aim is to continue planning activities with industry partners, funders and stakeholders, and to refine any remaining strategic questions that need to be answered in order to understand the case for future changes.</p>



Theme 4: Organisation and Presentation of Material	
Consultation Response	Feedback and Next Steps
<p>The Route Study has been presented in a very accessible and clearly written way. This helps a range of stakeholders to engage with the material and issues.</p> <p>The Route Study is too simplistic and doesn't provide enough technical detail behind the assumptions it makes.</p>	<p>The ECML Route Study was deliberately different to previous studies. We responded to feedback from our customers, funders and wider stakeholders to consciously adopt a simpler presentational style and language.</p> <p>Doing this has helped transition from the previous long term planning process to a more stakeholder-focussed agile approach.</p> <p>As part of this approach, we will continue to tailor reporting scope and style to the strategic questions being answered, and the audience asking them.</p>
<p>The Route Study made value choices in its tone and use of language; for example stating that some schemes were 'very costly'. Network Rail should leave it to scheme proposers, funders and those making the business case to decide what is costly or affordable.</p>	<p>The Route Study did raise the theme of the affordability of schemes, and used language that would let potential funders understand the scale of investment required.</p> <p>While it is acknowledged that the use of such terms could be seen as value laden, the authors consider them a valid way of showing where business cases need to consider affordability as well as value for money.</p>



Network Rail Limited and
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
1 Eversholt Street
London NW1 2DN
Tel 020 7557 8000
networkrail.co.uk
Company number: 4402220
Registered in England and Wales