

# Network Rail Anglia Route Study Draft for Consultation

## issued November 2014

*(can be viewed at <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/long-term-planning-process/anglia-route-study>)*

Consultation comments  
from the Revd Paul Haworth  
17 Ember Way  
BURNHAM-ON-CROUCH  
CM0 8TJ  
responding in a personal capacity.

*(paragraph references relate to the published draft)*

### 1.1.5

I fully accept the need for a revised methodology that takes account of “network-wide long-term infrastructure development, rather than an incremental ‘as now plus isolated enhancements’ to the rail network”. However, I submit that the methodology adopted in this study is lacking in ambition, driven as it is by a demand-responsive culture rather than a truly aspirational vision for our railways.

### 1.1.6

It is said that “the approach is intended to adapt to potential structural changes in the economy, and the approach to social and environmental responsibility, so that the rail industry can respond to change over the long term life of the assets used to operate the rail network” Although it is clearly good that the industry seeks to order its affairs in ways that demonstrate social and environment responsibility, there is also a case to be made for a railway system that actively promotes such values, e.g. by incentivising modal

shifts from other means of transport which are more damaging to the fabric of our society and its environment.

#### 3.4.28

The study recognises a number of outputs as being essential to the delivery of improved passenger satisfaction, yet these are skeletal: “improved connectivity (faster and more frequent trains), providing the required capacity to avoid crowding, providing access to the network”. Faster and more frequent trains do not in themselves lead to improved connectivity; the avoidance of overcrowding, although much to be desired, is a re-active and not pro-active stance; and providing access is a matter of compliance with requirements that many other industries already have to face in the shape of a legal liability.

#### 3.4.29

The study acknowledges that “some aspects of a good train service are not picked up in the previous outputs”; these are said to include “the reliability and punctuality of services, comfort, quality and cleanliness of rolling stock and the quality of the station environment”. To which one might add the need for rail users to feel “looked after” at every stage of the process, be that a personal journey or an expedition of freight.

The industry needs to understand that the product purchased by the customer is not simply a conveyance from A to B; it is a multi-faceted experience, one that demands a much larger envelope than many in the rail business seem able to grasp. Of particular concern is the level of support given to customers whose journey has more than one leg, such as those transferring on and off feeder branch lines – too many interchange stations currently offer primitive or non-existent toilet facilities, and spartan waiting rooms that are limited in their times of opening. Consistently helpful and relevant communications are needed at all times, to inform and alert passengers, especially in the event of disruption or delay. Customers prefer to hear a real-time announcement from an identifiable individual rather than being subjected to a standardised apology or instruction read from a script or a recording broadcast at the push of a button.

The study suggests that such customer service outputs “are principally a matter for franchise specification and management rather than for the Long Term Planning Process”. I disagree. The franchise concept has brought about a series of fiefdoms that lack coherent identity and frequently fail to delight their customers.

### 6.7.3

I fail to grasp the rationale for using 2 tph on branch lines as a standardised target against which to test conditional outputs beyond 2043. Funders need to start from a much broader set of aspirations and then narrow these down to produce the necessary range of operational targets. In other words, this study puts the cart before the horse. It claims to offer aspirations [3.3.2] whereas in point of fact it makes recommendations.

The unit of measurement (tph) is equally unsatisfactory on various other grounds:-

(a) it pre-supposes a clock-face method for setting train operating diagrams, regardless of whether this is the best interests of customers seeking good connections at possibly two or even three interchanges within a complex network;

(b) it leads to absurdly artificial outputs when applied slavishly, e.g. at paragraph 6.34 where there is mention of a possible fast service that would not call at either of the two busiest stations on the Southminster branch;

(c) it fails to take account of the customer service significance of what is reckoned as a 'train' and what is an 'hour' – we are not dealing here with cattle loaded into trucks, but with a whole range of ambient factors that enable the quality of the passenger experience to be commercially matched to the aspirations of each target group of customers. The unique selling point of the railway is its ability to shrink time by offering an office, a restaurant, a bar, a conference, a classroom, a nap, and so on, each of which may be enjoyed whilst on the move. Truly a magic carpet experience – but it will not rise spontaneously from an infrastructure whose planners are blind to such possibilities. Hence my conclusion: this study needs to be set on its head so that product excellence may become the master and infrastructure the servant.

[END]

**...return to [previous index](#)**