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Dear Emyl,

In the matter of timetabling panel determination HAL/TTP003

Network Rail have been informed that Heathrow Airport Limited and Heathrow Express Operating Company are appealing this decision to the ORR. Network Rail request that the ORR support the appeal to avoid negative wider impacts to the network.

The purpose of this letter is to set out the context that has led to the dispute as well as the impact that upholding the decision of the ADRC will have on the industry and our ability to run a high-performing railway.

Context

1. Heathrow Express (HEX) have dedicated access to platforms 6 and 7 at London Paddington Station and had access to two platforms at Heathrow Airport Terminal 5. This was to ensure that the service was high performing and limited reactionary delays occurring.
2. It has already been recognised by all parties that to facilitate the Elizabeth Line to serve Terminal 5 at Heathrow that HEX would need to reduce to single platform operation there, while manageable it was recognised that this would have a performance impact.
3. Following delays to the opening of the Crossrail Central Operating Section the Department of Transport entered into a commercial settlement with HEX to reduce to single platform operation at London Paddington Station from the commencement of the December 2019 timetable. This was required to allow MTR services and an uplift in GWR services to operate from London Paddington high-level station between start of service and 20:02 Monday to Friday. The impact on HEX is that they have an 8-minute turnaround time at London Paddington and a 26-minute turnaround time at Heathrow Terminal 5. To facilitate the long turnaround times at Heathrow both platforms at Terminal 5 is required.
4. Concurrently Heathrow Airport have given firm rights to MTR to operate 4tph to Terminal 4 and 2tph to Terminal 5. MTR have bid to operate to Terminal 5 in line with their firm rights. HAL declined this bid and instructed Network Rail to continue offering HEX 4tph to Terminal 5 and MTR 2tph to the Heathrow Central Transport Area (CTA), due to Terminal 4 being closed as a result of the pandemic.
5. MTR appealed this decision to the ADRC reference HAL/TTP003. This appeal was upheld on the 27th October 2021 and HAL were instructed to provide MTR with their firm rights.

Impact

This section of the letter sets out what the operational and performance impact would be for the industry if the decision of the ARDC was upheld.

1. Operations

- The principal challenge to operating with a single platform at either end of the service is the recovery of the service during periods of disruption. The HEx service only has one intermediate stop at CTA, having the service run-fast through this station to recover time would not be an option as it is the busiest station at Heathrow serving two terminals.
- Due to no crossover between CTA and the Heathrow tunnel portal, terminating the service short at CTA from London would be very likely to cause further delays to following services or departures from Heathrow.
- The only realistic option to recover the service would be to cancel a round trip
- With single platform operations at both ends and a 15-minute service frequency a failure to depart on time would result in trains queuing or needing to utilise an additional platform
In both these cases this would result in reactionary delay being passed on to other services across the network

2. Performance Analysis

From the introduction of the December 19 timetable until the commencement of COVID-19, HEx was operating with a single platform at London Paddington and longer layover times at Heathrow Airport. This is the closest timetable to what will be operating from December 2021, if HAL's appeal is upheld. During this time, performance was:

- 99.8 % of HEx services had a right time departure from Heathrow.
- This delivered an overall performance of 71.5 % RT against a target of 70 % ; PPM of 91.5 % against a target of 91.4 % with cancellations at 2.9 % against a target of 1.8 % .

Following analysis, the following sets out what could be expected if short turn arounds occur at both London Paddington and Heathrow for HEx services:

Impact on right time departure at Heathrow

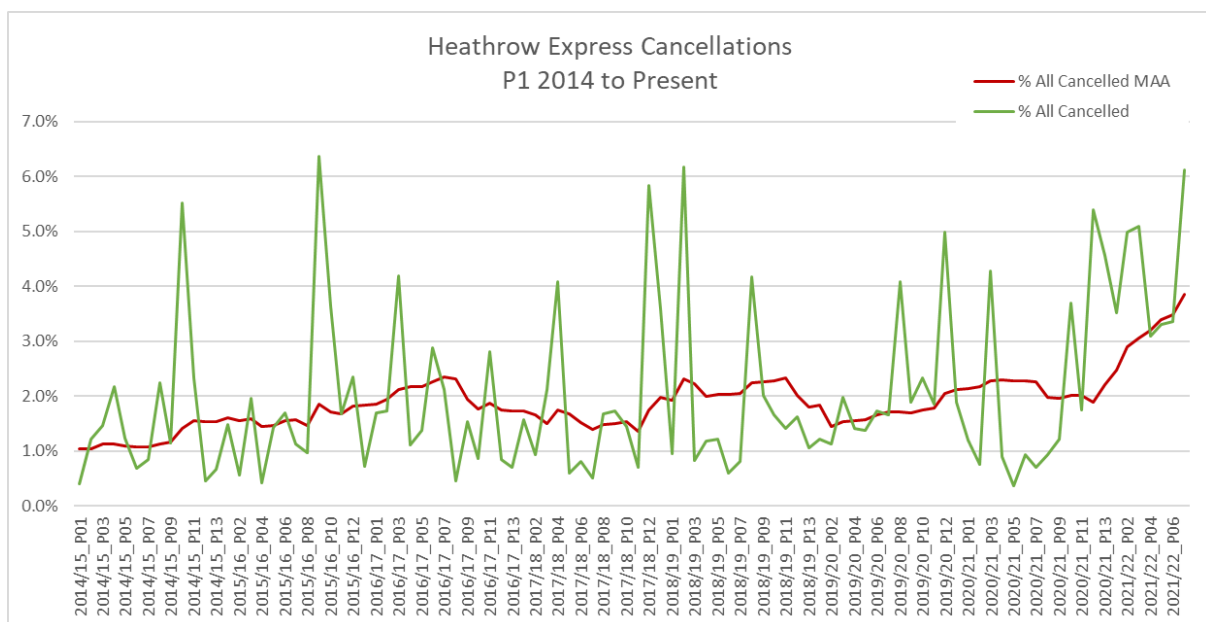
- Assuming HEx step up drivers so that there is always a driver waiting to work the next service, a turn-around time of five minutes could be achieved.
- As the timetabled dwell time is 10 minutes, a train that was six minutes late could be assumed to depart late.
- Based on data between Dec 2019 until COVID this would suggest a 3.8 % reduction in Right Time performance.
- Furthermore, it would be expected that 2.8 % of services (that is those which arrived 8 minutes or more late) would depart late enough to miss their path on the Great Western Mainline at Airport Junction. This would lead to reactionary delays on the wider network.
- It is therefore concluded that there would be a loss of 6.6 % on Right Time performance which is considered unacceptable for a high performing service.

Impact on Right Time at Destination

- HEx has an agreed target of 70 % of trains arriving Right Time Destination; defined as within 59 seconds of the publicly published arrival time.
- Current Post-COVID performance has seen HEx comfortably achieve this target in 6 of 7 periods this Year. However, the Period of weaker punctuality at Destination has coincided with a marginal drop in punctuality at Departure, with a periodic drop of approximately 2 % punctuality at Departure coinciding with a 5 % drop in punctuality at destination.
- The correlation is based on only a limited number of Post-Covid data points, however Pre-Covid HEx performance highlights significant historical challenges in achieving the required 70 % target. Given the forecast 3 % drop in Right Time Departures, the impact of this on HEx performance as measured at destination could result in a considerable deterioration in performance to unacceptable levels.

Impact on HEx cancellations

- The current MAA for Heathrow Express cancellations is 3.9 % which is a six-year high and is forecasted against a target of 2 % . This has been driven by technical fleet delays, of which approximately 94 % are TOC-on-Self.
- When services are cancelled the unit would be required to occupy a platform either at Heathrow which would quickly result in queuing or London Paddington awaiting their next on-time rotation or a path to return to the depot.
- As cancelling services would be the only option available to recover poor running of the HEx service this would only result in further cancellations and worsening of the MAA.



- Current timetable operates with short turn arounds at both ends of the service
- The largest cause of reactionary delay to this service group is late arrival of booked inbound stock (33 %). It would be expected that the Heathrow Express service group would equally see an increase in reactionary delay to a similar level (increase of 7.5 %)
- From December 2021 this timetable is being recast to allow for longer turnaround times more frequently during the day. This is expected to result in a significant improvement in overall performance and reliability of this service group.

As the operator of the wider network, it is known that high performing railways cannot operate on minimal turnaround times at either end of the journey when there is no recovery time, or options to recover time during the journey.

3. Options to return to two platform operation at Paddington

- As the December 21 timetable has been offered back there is no option to create capacity at London Paddington to offer HEx back both platforms 6 & 7.
- Network Rail has only let contingent rights for the additional GWR services and have not let any rights to MTR services from May 22 timetable between Westbourne Park and Paddington.
- Therefore, the realistic opportunity for both platforms at Paddington to be returned to HEx is not until through running of the Elizabeth Line facilitating MTR services to vacate Paddington.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I would therefore encourage you to uphold the appeal in the interest of the wider industry. The situation has only presented itself due to the on-going delay to the opening of the Crossrail Central Operating Section and the need to increase platform capacity at London Paddington station to facilitate increased passenger services. Network Rail remains committed to facilitating the opening of the full Elizabeth Line service recognising the benefit this will bring to all organisations.

However, as we are encouraging a return to rail, passengers are expecting higher standards of punctuality and levels of performance. While acknowledging airport patronage is increasing, recent reports suggest it is only at 45 % of 2019 level. It must therefore be assessed whether six tph to Terminal 5 is justified at the detriment to the wider rail network.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Gallop
Western Route & Strategic Operations Director