

NETWORK UTILISATION STRATEGY - SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

	Consultation comments from Summary Report	Statement of Principles Volumes 1 & 2	Network Utilisation Strategy (NUS)
Role of Rail	Many consultees pointed out that the role of rail differed in different parts of the country. Also that the purpose of rail was to transport people and goods and not to move trains. Customers should come before operators. There were conflicting views on whether rail should be mainly market driven and commercial or fulfil a wider social agenda. The majority favoured the latter approach.	The SoP acknowledges the differing objectives of train services in different parts of the country. It explains that SRA's appraisal criteria do cover wider issues such as regeneration and social inclusion.	The SRA agrees that it is important to focus on user benefits. This is reflected throughout the NUS. The NUS takes forward three imperatives that are key to customers. They are the need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve train running performance by reducing congestion; – Cater for significant freight and passenger growth on the existing network; – Control costs by improving engineering access.
Capacity vs Performance	The trade-offs between capacity and performance were seen as key by many consultees. A number of issues were identified to be addressed: relief of known and long standing bottlenecks, realignment of incentives, relief of overcrowding and the need to build sufficient “white space” into the timetable for performance purposes.	The SoP states that changes to the Franchise policy will ensure management incentives are more direct.	Chapter 2 of the NUS explicitly addresses the trade-off between train service provision and performance. There is a point at which benefits arising from the operation of further services are likely to be outweighed by the effect of worsening service. This point is identified in the NUS analysis. Where additional services are proposed above this level, the SRA wants the performance costs to be explicitly taken into account.
Measurement of Capacity	There were views – particularly from train operators – that there needed to be a means of measuring capacity. Also views that capacity was about the numbers of passengers and the amount of freight transported not the number of trains operated. Numbers of seats and numbers of platforms were also seen as features of capacity which should be taken into account.	The SoP explains that the SRA is working with Network Rail on development of capacity utilisation indices.	In Section 2 the NUS sets out how capacity can be measured through use of a Capacity Utilisation Index (CUI). The Long Distance Statement is currently expressed in terms of tph. The Route Utilisation Strategies (RUSs) will look at more detailed measures of ‘volume’ in terms of train lengths and seats. The RUSs will take into account the implications for stations and platform lengths.
Appraisal Criteria and Processes	Many respondents were looking for more detail on both the appraisal criteria (including how factors would be weighted) and also the processes. There was a lot of comment that these all needed to be transparent. There were proposals from a few that growth targets should be broken down by route. The Scottish responses referred to the need for any appraisal relating to Scotland to be compatible with STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance).	The SoP explained that the SRA's appraisal criteria are consistent with appraisal guidance from central government and with NATA (New Approach to Transport Appraisal) and that they cover wider issues such as regeneration and social inclusion. The SoP also explained why growth targets would not be split down by route at this stage. It anticipated sharing details of modelling techniques with stakeholders as these are developed.	Publication of the SRA's "Guide to the appraisal of Rail Services" in April 2003 should give the detail and transparency that consultees sought. Planning assumptions have been specifically created for the NUS and are included in chapter four.

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Timescales and Scope	<p>There was concern from some quarters (notably industry stakeholders) that the size of the task had been underestimated, that timescales were too optimistic and there were big questions around resources. There was enthusiasm to get on with the CUP as quickly as possible tempered with other views that it was important to get it right. Some concern that CUP should not be allowed to hold up committed proposals.</p>	<p>The SoP explained that the SRA is opting for a balanced approach - maintaining momentum in the process whilst being as thorough and rigorous as possible. The NUS will contain a timetable for development of RUSs to allow stakeholders to plan ahead. CUP will not prevent improvements to services being made as part of normal timetable development work nor delay projects which are planned to bring capacity improvements or operational flexibility to the network.</p>	<p>The Route Utilisation Strategies (RUSs), aim to make the best use of scarce capacity in delivering train services to rail customers and taxpayers.</p> <p>There will be ten RUSs, focussed on routes where there is congestion, performance problems, and pressure for further service growth.</p> <p>A three year programme for RUS completion is set out in Section 5 of the NUS.</p>
Stakeholder Involvement	<p>Non-industry stakeholders were very keen to participate in all aspects of developing the CUP, NUS and RUS. Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) pointed out their statutory position and requested an appeal mechanism for when/if SRA decisions conflict with their own statutory duties. Non-PTE Local Authorities and Regional Assemblies believed they should have a similar role to PTEs. User groups and lobby groups all wanted to be involved or at the least consulted.</p>	<p>The SoP makes reference to the statutory roles of the Scottish Executive, PTEs and TfL. The SRA agrees that local and regional policies have an important role to play and believes that the stakeholder involvement process described in Principle 3 should address any concerns. Any right of appeal for PTEs would be through statutory mechanisms. The SoP points out that the SRA does not have the same statutory relationship with Local Authorities in non-PTE areas.</p>	<p>Section 5 explains how stakeholder involvement is an integral part of developing Route Utilisation Strategies.</p> <p>Stage 2 of the RUS process involves discussions with statutory planning authorities, rail industry players, customers and their representatives and others on the need for change on each route.</p> <p>In Stage 3 industry stakeholders, Network Rail, PTEs, Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly, TfL and Rail Passengers Council will be invited to contribute to the development of the options.</p> <p>The draft RUS emerging from the process described in Section 5 of the NUS will be published for formal consultation. This consultation will be undertaken according to the SRA's Consultation Policy.</p>
Compatibility with other Policies and Plans	<p>There was a widespread view that CUP needed to fit in with central, regional and local government policies, strategies and plans and should take on board the outputs from multi-modal studies. Wider policy issues such as land use planning, regeneration and social inclusion needed to be taken into account. There was a need to reconcile with other SRA policies such as Fares and Franchising.</p>	<p>Principle 3 sets out that wider government policies, strategies and plans will be taken on board. It is explained that the appraisal criteria do take on board wider social issues. Within work on the Route Map to 2004 the SRA intends to carry out scenario analysis which will allow consideration of the impacts of the new Fares Policy for capacity utilisation.</p>	<p>Section 1 sets out how the NUS will fit with other SRA strategies, policies and initiatives. Section 5 sets out how in Stage 3 of the RUS process aspirations from central, regional and local government policies, strategies and plans and the outputs from studies such as Multi-Modal Studies will be taken on board.</p>

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Roles of Industry Players	There was a mixture of views on the role of the SRA, Network Rail and Train Operators. Many welcomed the proposed leadership role of the SRA but others were concerned not to stifle the commercial initiative of train operators. Others stressed the need to closely involve industry stakeholders as they have the necessary skills and experience and are closer to the customer. Suppliers (both rolling stock and infrastructure maintenance) thought they had an important role to play. A few suggested that train operators should cooperate with each other more, both to provide services and also share resources. The roles of SRA and the Rail Regulator must be clarified according to some – notably the Railway Forum and SouthWest Trains.	The SoP welcomed the support for the SRA's leadership role from consultees. Principle 3 sets out the intended involvement of industry stakeholders in RUS and explained that timetable development work will generally be carried out by Network Rail to the SRA's specification.	Section 1 of the NUS clarifies the respective roles of the SRA, the Rail Regulator, Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies in relation to capacity. The SRA sponsors the consumption of capacity to deliver passenger and freight services. The Regulator's role is to determine the fair and efficient allocation of capacity by Network Rail. In the RUS process, industry stakeholders will be invited to contribute to developing options for a route as their operational and commercial expertise is seen as crucial. How the SRA intends to work with the Rail Regulator on NUS is set out in Section 1.
Contractual Framework	There was widespread view that Franchise Agreements will need to be reviewed and any change and compensation mechanisms made clear. Also that incentives would need to be realigned and the Passenger Service Requirement (PSR), Rules of the Route, Rules of the Plan etc. reviewed.	The SoP explains that existing contracts will be honoured. The new Franchise Agreements will include a straightforward variation mechanism. It is intended that the implementation plans for the strategies would address contractual issues.	The NUS restates the position as outlined in the SoP. Section 2 of the NUS explains that the SRA wishes to see Network Rail to complete its Structural Review of Timetables which will include reviewing the Rules of the Route and the Rules of the Plan. The new Model franchise agreement contains provision for service specifications to be updated based on RUS outputs and RPAs as they become available.
Freight	Freight operators pointed out that they are not subject to instruction from the SRA. Whilst welcoming the CUP (particularly the Long Distance Statement) they were concerned that their contractual relationships with their customers and their ability to offer certainty should not be compromised. There were strong views on the need for a Rail Regulator who was independent of government. There were some strong views from local government, lobby groups and some London based passenger Train Operating Companies that freight should be diverted away from the capital as much as practicable. Freight customers also thought they should be involved in developing the NUS and RUSs.	The SoP explained that the SRA intends that RUS development, which will be explained in more detail in the NUS, will provide the processes necessary to involve freight stakeholders fully, take account of freight capacity needs and provide appropriate methodology for appraisal of the benefits freight can deliver.	Annex C of the NUS sets out a separate statement of long distance freight services. The RUS process will allow freight stakeholders (both operators and customers) an opportunity to contribute to options and comment on the draft proposals. One of the key issues that is recognised in the NUS is the need to identify and provide alternative routes on major flows to enable traffic to continue to flow during engineering works. The opportunity to divert freight away from the capital as much as practicable will be addressed as part of the RUS process.

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Long Distance vs Local	There was much concern from non-industry stakeholders, some passenger Train Operating Companies and lobby groups that long distance services did not squeeze off socially necessary or commuter services and that existing users were protected. In responding to the question on which routes should be included in the Long Distance Statement most mentioned the intercity mainlines but there were varying views on which other services should be included. Many felt the LDS should provide a framework and not a “blueprint”.	The SoP explains that it is not the SRA's intention to prioritise any particular type of traffic in the development of options. SoP makes clear that the process of developing the LDS is iterative. In addition the SRA will use consistent criteria for the appraisal of all services.	The LDS in the NUS provides a starting point. The LDS will be subject to iteration and updating following development of the RUSs and the publication of the results of the Rail Regulator's Interim Review. In Section 2 the SRA sets out how it will consider bids for additional services in congested areas and how it does not currently intend to take immediate steps to remove existing trains wherever the CUI is currently above 75%. It recognises that services operate within the terms of contractually binding access agreements. Instead it will seek appropriate opportunities to review service levels and mix, for example when new franchises are let or within a relevant RUS.
Scope of RUS	Many felt that all routes should be included in at least one RUS. There was a lot of support for major conurbations such as Manchester, Birmingham and London having an area or network RUS. Also much support for alternative/diversionary routes being included. There was a lot of enthusiasm for the RUS and for stakeholders to be closely involved. It was considered important to link with SRA's rolling stock strategy to get convergence of infrastructure and rolling stock issues on a route.	The SoP explained that substantive comments relating to the RUS process will be dealt with in NUS. Any comments from consultees on individual routes will be considered in the relevant RUS.	The programme of RUSs covers all the major intercity routes and major conurbations. Each RUS will consider services that extend well beyond its notional boundaries to ensure the comprehensive assessment of timetabling options and the overall connectivity of train services. This should allay consultees concerns about managing overlaps and the need to improve connections. As stated previously all stakeholders will have the opportunity to contribute to the development of RUSs and be consulted on the proposals emerging from the process. The outputs from the NUS and RUS will feed into the SRA's Rolling Stock Strategy.
Illustrative Forward Timetables	There was almost unanimous support for the development of Illustrative Forward Timetables although a few consultees were sceptical that they could be delivered and there were differing views on the amount of detail that should be included. Clockface/regular interval timetables received a lot of support but others held the view that they would not be appropriate in all cases and might actually constrain capacity. The need for a connections policy also arose several times, as did the need for integration with other modes and the need to include major possessions.	Clockface timetables would be considered and adopted if appropriate and offer better use of capacity	Forward timetables will be produced to support the RUS process Clockface/regular interval timetables will be considered within individual RUS to assess what benefits they bring to capacity utilisation and customers.

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EC and International	A few responses mentioned the EC Directive 2001/14 and the need to be compliant and a few mentioned the need to consider international best practice.	Principle 2 sets out the latest understanding on how EC2001/14 will apply.	In the preparation of the NUS the SRA has taken into account the provisions of EC Directives 2001/12 EC, 2001/13 EC, 2001/14 EC – known as the First Infrastructure Package. The Package, which is soon to be transposed into UK law, places a number of obligations on the “Infrastructure Manager”, SRA and the Rail Regulator. The SRA is working with these obligations in the NUS and the development of the RUSs.
Engineering Access	A number of responses mentioned the need to review engineering access issues – particularly possession strategies. Any review should look at the long term as well as the short term and at life cycle costs. There was a need to review the engineering aspects of the Track Access Agreements. Engineering strategies were put forward as a key requirement of the RUSs.	In the SoP the SRA set out its views that it does not believe it would be appropriate for an SRA policy to aim to improve the management of possessions: that is the proper responsibility of Network Rail. However, it does accept that engineering work should be planned and managed in a way that achieves a cost effective balance between capacity available for the operation of trains and for possessions. Via the Route based analysis in its Route Map to 2004, the SRA intends to bring together the analysis of infrastructure and cost reduction initiatives with the capacity utilisation work.	The SRA is intending to work with Network Rail and the Rail Regulator to consider the costs and benefits of alternative possession strategies through the Interim Review, the conclusions of which will be reflected in RUSs and the next NUS. Engineering access issues will be addressed as part of the RUS process.
Factors affecting Capacity Utilisation	The responses to the question asking what additional factors which impact on capacity should be taken into consideration resulted in a very long list which will be used as briefing for the RUS process.		Some of the key factors such as increasing train length and loads, pattern and mix of services, the take up of train paths, strengthening timetables and improving engineering access are addressed in Section 2 of the NUS. Other factors will be taken account of in the RUS process.
Rolling Stock	There was a lot of support for specification of rolling stock performance characteristics but warnings that this would take time if it were to be introduced cost effectively. Some, however, felt that the rolling stock market was already sufficiently regulated.	SRA does not want to undermine the rolling stock market but feels it has a role to play in specifying certain characteristics which impact on capacity utilisation.	The outputs from the NUS and RUS will inform the SRA's rolling stock strategy (consultation to be published shortly). The draft RUS containing the preferred solution will set out details of preferred rolling stock characteristics for the route.

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Infrastructure Enhancement	Some felt that RUSs should take on board defining detailed proposals for major infrastructure enhancements whereas others were content for a RUS to identify simply that enhancement was needed. Strong support for RUSs proposing IOS (Incremental Output Statement) type schemes and looking at piggy-backing minor enhancements on renewals.	CUP will identify where capacity is constrained and where investment could be beneficial. However the issue of enhancement investment is wider than CUP and so will be handled separately.	A RUS might contain proposals for minor enhancements that could improve capacity. These could either be stand alone IOS type schemes or opportunities to piggy-back on renewals. Such proposals would be subject to value for money and affordability tests. However, whilst opportunities to upgrade a route might be identified in a RUS these types of enhancement cover wider issues than just capacity utilisation and therefore need to be handled separately.
Commercial Confidentiality	The majority saw commercial confidentiality as a non-issue and welcomed a more open and frank approach. Those who did see a potential issue thought it could be handled relatively easily.		