

The Role of the Train Operator

On 1st April 1994, British Rail (which itself have been created initially as the Railways Executive (of the British Transport Commission) on 1st January 1948. Was split into two organisations. Railtrack PLC who were the owner of all the railway infrastructure (track and signals) along with the operational controls. And British Rail who owned all the Train Operators along with all the Maintenance and Renewals companies. Prior to the 1st April all the Freight Companies had been sold (apart from Freightliner, all went to the American based Wisconsin Central and all the Rolling Stock (and passenger locomotives) had been sold off into 3 Leasing companies (ROSCOs); Angel Trains; Porterbrook Leasing and Eversholt Trains.

Under privatisation, shares in Railtrack PLC were sold by the Government in May 1996.

The 1993 Railways Act created two regulatory bodies; the Office of Rail Regulator (the first Regulator was John Swift QC) who was responsible for oversight of all Railway Undertakings. The Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (headed by merchant banker Roger Salmon) was establish to transfer the 25 British Rail owned train operating business into the Private Sector. The first franchises were South West Trains (run by bus operator Stagecoach) and Great West Trains (a management team 'by-out'). Both began operating at mid-night on Sunday (morning) 4th February 1996. It was expected to include LTS Trains (now better known as c2c) as a management buyout but irregularities involving Travelcard season ticket sales, forced the sale to be abandoned at the last minute.

Under the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (OPRAF), and subsequently the Strategic Rail Authority and more recently the Department for Transport, each Franchise was let for fixed periods of time to owning groups e.g. National Express Group, First Group. Over time, a number of franchises have been combined; Anglia Railways; Great Eastern and part of WAGN became London Eastern Railway now known as National Express East Anglia. Some Franchises have been split up; Silverlink metro services now operate as LOROL whilst the longer distance trains on the West Coast route merged with parts of Central Trains to form London Midland.

The role of the Train Operator is to provide services based on the commitments they have made within their Franchise Agreements with the Department for Transport. Each agreement will have be gained on the basis of running a minimum number of services (The

Service Level Commitment[SLC]) in return for an agreed level of funding (supported services) or to make a payment back to the DfT (The Franchise Premium). It is the challenge of every franchise to operate the SLC for the minimum cost so that the costs of operation are covered by income (ticket sales) plus any payments from DfT. This challenge shapes each Train Operator.

For an operator to run services they must have a Safety Case, a Track Access Agreement and Station Access Agreements (for them to use any station not leased to them) along with agreements with rolling stock companies (from whom the train sets are leased) and other operators where access is need to any Light Maintenance Depot.

There are various types of franchised train operator (19 in total at time of compilation):

- The longer distance operators, which operate “intercity” type services, e.g. NX East Coast, Virgin Trains and Arriva Cross Country, provide fast, regular, reliable long-distance services based around providing a comfortable, high level product for business, commuter and leisure travellers.
- Regional type operators, e.g. Northern Rail and Arriva Trains Wales, are those that operate local stopping services in and around main towns and cities serving local communities and providing peak-hour commuter services.
- Commuter operators, e.g. South West Trains, Southeastern and Southern, who provide frequent, high-density services into and out of the capital mainly focussed around providing an intensive service in the morning and evening peak.

The main focus for the Train Operators is to provide services based on customer demand, thereby providing revenue to maintain and improve the Franchise. It is worth remembering:

- Without the customer there is no revenue, just cost
- Without revenue, there is no train
- Without the train, there is no timetable
- Without the timetable, there is no business

The customer is vitally important to the business and the industry. The customer is why we exist.

Train Planning Role of the Train Operator

- Owns or leases trains, runs them over Network Rail's track and signalling infrastructure. Pays Network Rail for access to that infrastructure.
- Determines which trains they wish to continue to operate in each new timetable year (Principle and Subsidiary Timetables are treated as a single timetable).
- Determines which services it need to change to meet demands.
- Plans for any new services which might be needed.
- Submits Priority Date Declaration to Network Rail detailing:
 - Unchanged services
 - Services for which it has Rights but which are not currently timetabled (usually through lack of demand)
 - Services it wishes to change
 - Details of new Rights that will be needed to be obtained for ORR for any new or amended services.

Train Planning Responsibilities of the Train Operator

- Origin, destination and calling points of a train
- Proposes timings and/or point to point timings
- Length of stations stops (Station Dwell time)
- Connecting trains into/out of
- Traction, stock e.g. diesel electric etc.
- Length of train (number of coaches/wagons)
- Platform usage, limitation
- Maximum speed
- Economic use of locos, stock, train crews
- Servicing, cleaning etc. (Turn Round times)
- Station staffed (or not)
- Water (toilets, restaurant cars etc)

Train Planning Role of Network Rail

- Owns track and signalling infrastructure over which trains run, manages the process, ensures equal treatment of every Train Operator and publishes train timings in the National Rail Timetable and Working Timetables. All these activities are set out in its Network Licence.

Train Planning Responsibilities of Network Rail

- Maximises track capacity to ensure robust performance of trains.
- Validates the Train Operators plan
- Determines timing headways within signalling limits
- Resolves conflicting movements
- Manages all aspects of signalling along with Signal box hours of opening.
- Engineering allowances required to deliver planned maintenance and renewal but which will not de-grade performance.
- Production of NRT and WTT (like the NRT, the aim is to produce the WTT in electronic (pdf) format only)

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THE TRAIN OPERATOR - A REMINDER

Just let us remind ourselves of what the Train Operator needs to take into consideration when supplying Network Rail with a service specification.

Train Specification

- Journey details e.g. origin, destination, key times, calling points
- Connecting services
- Train Classification e.g. type, characteristics
- Traction type e.g. locomotive, unit
- Load e.g. number of vehicles, weight
- Speed
- Route geography e.g. track and signalling considerations
- Rules of the Route
- Rules of the Plan

BUT the Train Operator has a lot more to think about and a lot more constraints, conflicts, etc.

- Track Access Agreements
- Franchising Agreements
- Leasing Agreements e.g. Stations, Locos, Stock
- Investment for new stock etc
- Resource Planning e.g. locos, stock, drivers, guards
- Platforming e.g. Commercial/Customer needs, Dwell Times, Turn Rounds, Cleaning, Labelling, Watering etc
- Retailing
- Marketing of their product
- Administration