



By email : request-494467-c7317002@whatdotheyknow.com

Network Rail
Freedom of Information
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27th July 2018

Dear Juhani Pirttilahti

Information request
Reference number: FOI2018/00834

Thank you for your email of 28th June 2018, in which you requested the following information:

'1) Mappings of signal berths provided by C-class messages to railway signals, containing at least this information:

- TD area
- berth identifier
- signal number

2) Mappings of data bits that appear in S-class messages to railway signals, typically held in a SOP file or ECS document, containing at least this information:

- TD area
- address
- data bit
- item description / signal number.

There is no need for any additional information beyond this level. Also I would like to limit the search for records to cover only the Scottish region at this time.'

I have processed your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

While I can confirm that we hold the information you have requested, I am of the view that it is exempt from disclosure under section 31(1)(a) and section 38(1) of the FOIA.

I am aware that we have provided similar information under the FOIA previously, however, due to raised security risks we are refusing your request on this occasion. Where information may once have appeared suitable for disclosure, any decision about disclosure is ultimately one of timing and we need to consider each request on its own merits and consider the public interest in the current climate.

Due to the operational information contained in these files, we consider that disclosure in this instance would release significant information about signal operations into the public domain where it could be used by those who may wish to disrupt, interfere with or attack the workings of our infrastructure.

The consequences of such activity would be likely to adversely affect public safety and endanger individuals.

It is particularly important to remember that disclosures made under the FOIA are disclosures to the 'world at large' and any information disclosed is released into the public domain rather than being provided to one individual in a private transaction. Consequently, we have to consider the wider impact of disclosure and we cannot take into account the motives of an applicant even when they are well-intentioned.

The section 31(1) and 38(1) exemptions are subject to a public interest test and this means that we are required to consider whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs the public interest in maintaining the exemptions.

In this case, disclosure would contribute to increasing transparency and public knowledge about the operation and workings of this specific aspect of rail infrastructure and support the information already provided on our open data feeds.

Conversely, there is little public interest in the disclosure of this type of information in terms of demonstrating accountability, as the information being technical and operational in nature, sheds no light on any factors such as public spending or management of the infrastructure.

There are strong arguments around withholding the information as disclosure would increase the likelihood and severity of potential harm to the security of the rail network and wider public safety. The information requested in this case is detailed technical information, which goes beyond that provided by our open data feeds. We have sought the expert views of colleagues within signalling, and have been advised that their concern is that by revealing such detailed information relating to signalling, the nature of the information means that it could be exploited to assist in cyber-attacks on the system. This could potentially lead to disruption of the railway network and create safety incidents by, for example, the mis-routing of trains.

The railway network has long been recognised as a potential target for terrorist and criminal activity. However, high-profile events such as the attack on NHS systems have further demonstrated that there are a number of determined individuals who will attempt to attack critical systems; these incidents have led us to review some of the information which we had previously considered safe to disclose.

We consider that these factors outweigh all others and after consideration of all the relevant we consider that the balance of the public interest lies in preventing harm to the security of the infrastructure and in ensuring the safety of those individuals who work and travel on the network.

Having considered the public interest, our decision is therefore to withhold the information under sections 31(1)(a) and 38(1) of the FOIA.

I am sorry that I was not able to provide all of the information that you are seeking. However, I hope the explanation is helpful. If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at FOI@networkrail.co.uk or on 01908 782405. Details of your appeal rights are below.

Yours sincerely

Joanne West
Senior Information Officer

Appeal Rights

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the Head of Freedom of Information at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at foi@networkrail.co.uk. Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF