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Rail Executive  
Department for Transport  
3rd Floor - Great Minster House  
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21st August 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re: Improvements to Cambridge - Kings Lynn services**

As you are aware Network Rail has been working with the Department for some time on options to improve services for passengers between Cambridge and Kings Lynn.

The principal scheme under development to support this aspiration to date has been the re-doubling of Ely North Junction, which when allied with other improvements could yield the opportunity to run two trains per hour in most off peak hours to/from Kings Lynn.

As we highlighted during the TSGN re-franchising process an increase in passenger train usage of the branch will trigger the need for upgrade of a number of Level Crossings along the line of route. As promised then we have now completed an initial assessment of the works required on the branch itself. The line has a very high number of foot and user worked crossings and some Automatic Half barriers (AHBs). Our initial assessment of the upgrade costs on the branch itself are in the region of [REDACTED] although this should be treated as a pre-GRIP estimate at this stage.

In addition to these costs as we have previously discussed, under guidance we now have in place for AHBs, the works at the junction itself may trigger the need to upgrade at least 2 of the 3 AHBs immediately north of the junction (the Queen Adelaide crossings). Normally in these circumstances we would opt for a full barrier crossing, however due to the close proximity of the crossings the extra barrier down time associated with a full barrier option could actually increase risk. As part of the Ely North Junction scheme development we are currently working through the options, but there is a high chance that additional costs for these specific crossings will now fall to the scheme.

With these factors in mind we are of the view that it may be sensible to defer the Ely North Junction project into early CP6 whilst we work with yourselves and local authorities to agree the right long term solutions to the immediately adjacent level crossings (the 3 Queen Adelaide crossings and Kiln Lane to the south) and also to find the right solutions to the level crossings on the Kings Lynn branch.

In the meantime we recognise the importance of developing and delivering works that will improve the service to passengers on this route. As you have noted the most pressing need for service improvement is actually in the peak rather than the off peak where the currently 4 car restricted trains are regularly overcrowded. If you are supportive we have some resource available that could undertake a GRIP 0-2 study that would set out the costs and programme for moving to 8 car operations on GTR services between Cambridge and Kings Lynn, using approximately [REDACTED] of the monies set aside for Ely North Junction in CP5. Whilst we cannot commit to delivery dates or delivery costs at this stage, completing this early GRIP work will put us in a position to give you more reliable information in this respect.

We have already met with your Projects team, and agreed the potential scope of such a study should you wish us to proceed with this proposal. If you would like us to take this further, please indicate and we will move the proposals through our internal authority process. It would also be helpful of the Department were to discuss the proposal further with GTR. We have already involved GTR in discussions at this end.

Yours sincerely,