

14th September 2001

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The Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) today announced that it is funding £17.5 million of development work for phase two of the project to upgrade the East Coast Main Line between London, Leeds and Edinburgh.

Led by the SRA and carried out by Railtrack, the work, which should be completed by December, maintains the gathering momentum on this vital infrastructure project.

Over 20 different projects will be covered. Key elements include: -

Peterborough area - Feasibility studies for remodelling track in the station area to increase capacity, including overhead line electrification, signalling and civil engineering design.

Freight priority routes - Survey work to track and structures, assessment of gauge clearances and level crossings.

GN/GE 'Joint Line' (Peterborough - Spalding - Lincoln -
Doncaster)

Doncaster - York

Northallerton - Ferryhill (via Yarm & Stockton)

Leamside Line (Ferryhill - Washington - Pelaw - Gateshead)

Peterborough - Edinburgh additional track capacity - Feasibility studies to evaluate options for additional passing loops and improving existing ones at eleven locations.

This is the first major agreement between the SRA and Railtrack for the ECML Upgrade since the SRA announced in April 2001 that it would establish a Joint Venture to take forward funding for the project.

SRA Chief Executive, Mike Grant said,

" It is vital that the current and future capacity shortfalls on East Coast are tackled through the upgrade programme, overall responsibility for which has now transferred from Railtrack to the Authority.

" We are taking the lead on development work now to ensure that, once the Leeds work is finished, momentum is maintained towards bringing the other elements of this massive engineering project in on time".

Railtrack's Chief Executive, Steve Marshall said,

"We are delighted to be working with the SRA to develop this enhancement project that will, once complete, provide enormous benefits for the travelling public."

Notes to editors

1. The East Coast Main Line (ECML) is the high speed-link between London, Yorkshire, the North East and Scotland. It carries Britain's fastest train service, handling passenger and heavy bulk freight and mail trains. On an average day, the ECML caters for 1,900 passenger trains carrying 200,000 people, and 250 freight services with a loading of around 20,000 tones.

2. The line is running out of capacity needed to meet the growing demand. Accommodating extra trains for both the passenger and freight operators is not possible within the existing infrastructure. The solution is to reduce the number of conflicting movements through infrastructure works at known pinch points and to utilise better parallel lines for freight.

**For further details contact the Department for Transport Rail Press desk:
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