



# Sussex Community Rail Partnership

Eridge Station, Groombridge Lane, Eridge, East Sussex TN3 9LE

Sussex RUS Consultation Response  
RUS Programme Manager  
Network Rail  
Floor 4 Kings Place  
90 York Way  
London N1 9AG

Dear Sir,

## **Network Rail Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy Comments from Sussex Community Rail Partnership**

1. The Sussex Community Rail Partnership is appreciative of the opportunity to comment on the Sussex RUS draft. The CRP has been particularly impressed at the extent to which Network Rail staff have gone to ensure a full understanding of the draft by local communities by holding additional consultation meetings in excess of the normal number and responding very fully to comments and questions raised during the consultation period. This is very welcome and greatly appreciated.
2. The Sussex CRP is principally concerned with the Uckfield Line (Uckfield to Oxted and East Grinstead to Oxted) The Arun Valley line and the Marshlink Line (Ashford to Hastings) though the Partners and communities it works with are also very interested in the Tonbridge line from Hastings, the line from Tonbridge to Redhill and on to Gatwick, the line from Seaford to Lewes and Brighton, and lines serving Brighton from rural areas.
3. **General.** The Sussex CRP is very disappointed with the Draft on four major counts. First it fails to stretch the thinking in the longer term so as to develop more imaginative ways of transferring more traffic from road to rail across a region where road improvements are even more costly and difficult than rail improvements. It does not seem to take fully into account planned developments, population

increases and the potential for increased demand for rail services where they are currently not provided.

4. Second, on the other hand, it equally fails to identify, even in list reference terms the many small but important little improvements which, collectively, could add up to potential service improvements being available for TOCs to capitalize on.

5. Thirdly, all the economic analysis is seriously flawed by the strictures imposed by the DfT in terms of returns for investment, not offering the possibility of more favourable demand forecasts, not exploring the use of external funding and not identifying the necessary further changes in, say, demand or funding that are needed to make a case for investment in infrastructure and / or rolling stock. Additionally, partners have suggested that demand figures do not adequately take into account population increase figures included in the most recent South East region plans

6. Fourthly, the Draft concentrates most of its attention on the Brighton line, clearly important because of the high level of traffic and the infrastructure constraints. However, that line has already only recently been the subject of a RUS in its own right and, given the constraints on infrastructure improvements on the Brighton line, it is surprising that much more work has not been done in this RUS to explore more thoroughly and with more relaxed investment criteria to find additional capacity along other routes. In particular we would have expected much deeper long term analysis and research to have been focussed on alternative North/South routes, especially Lewes to East Croydon via Uckfield and Chichester to London via Horsham and Dorking, the East and West Coastways and the East/West link through Tonbridge, Redhill and Guildford..

7. **Specific.** Given the reasons already well articulated by partners for the following significant infrastructure improvements the Sussex CRP is extremely disappointed that the methods used by Network Rail do not give more favourable results for the following lines :

- A through service from the Medway towns via Tonbridge to Gatwick;
- A through service from Hastings to City terminals via Tonbridge when Thames link is completed (also covered by the Kent RUS);
- The reinstatement of the Willingdon Chord (especially the lack of an analysis of freight potential);
- Earlier morning services serving Gatwick from the Arun Valley line to cater for the first shift and to help travelers arrive and depart from the early flights.;
- The reinstatement of the Lewes to Uckfield link (including, doubling and electrification);
- The redoubling and electrification of the full Uckfield to Hurst Green line and hence much improved services TO? as well as from Newhaven, Lewes, Uckfield, Edenbridge and stations in between, (previously covered by the South London RUS yet not re-explored like the Brighton Line RUS has been);

- The redoubling and electrification of the Marshlink line with the similar advantages of improved short distance (small stations) and longer distances services and freight potential, (also covered by the Kent RUS).
- With the arrival of a 24 hour railway during the period of this review the CRP would have expected increased provision for later and earlier trains on all lines.

8. The CRP would also have welcomed evidence of more intensive searches for additional (currently Network Rail owned) car parking space at stations where street and off station parking is in excess of double current capacity.

9. Station travel plans, an aspect of the new South Central franchise, should require some work at stations to improve vehicle (particularly bus to make better public transport interchanges), pedestrian and cycling access. The RUS should look at this in that Network Rail land will figure heavily in any developments

9. During consultation discussions Network Rail intimated that some additional work was still ongoing. The CRP would be grateful for the opportunity of a rapid review of the final results of this work before the RUS is submitted to ministers.

With kind regards,

Tim Sparrow  
Chairman, Sussex CRP

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