

The Future of Rail in Kent

Channel Tunnel Rail Link Domestic Services

Report of the Select Committee of



Kent County Council

With members of



Medway Council

January 2003

Kent County Council/Medway Council Select Committee

Future of Rail in Kent Review

Volume One

Executive Summary

Winter 2002/3

This Select Committee was established in the Autumn of 2002 and builds on the work of previous KCC Select Committee's that have looked into transport issues in the KCC area. This Committee included Members from Medway Council because rail network development and specifically CTRL Domestic services will have an affect in both Medway and the KCC area. It is also essential that all stakeholders in the County's rail network speak with a clear and coherent voice about the future of the network.

This review focused on CTRL Domestic services. When the review began an announcement was expected from Government on their preferred option for the CTRL (D) services in Kent. This review has sought to identify the best service pattern for the communities of Kent and Medway before the Government's announcement. This approach means that KCC and Medway have identified a benchmark position on CTRL (D) service patterns. It has been important to jointly establish this position before both Councils, and all stakeholders in the Kent rail network, continue the debate with the SRA and Government on the implementation of CTRL(D).

The Committee received evidence from a wide range of stakeholders in mid-November 2002. Their recommendations outline the immediate concerns about the development of CTRL(D) services and indicate what further steps should be taken to inform the lobbying process.

The Committee has identified that the development of CTRL Domestic services is an opportunity to improve the speed and capacity of rail services in Kent and Medway. This will not only affect areas on the CTRL line, but also in the parts of

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the County where journey times are longest and where increased capacity is needed to sustain development.

**Kent County Council/Medway Council
Select Committee**

Future of Rail in Kent Review

Volume Two

Winter 2002/3

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Section 1

1.1 Terms of Reference

The aim of the Select Committee is to clarify the best CTRL domestic services solution for Kent, both in terms of:

- the immediate benefits of the solution in terms of journey times and improved services to London and around Kent
- the long term benefits of the solution in terms of the impact on the wider rail network, transport in Kent and the social, economic and environmental benefits

This will involve investigating the necessary direct costs of the two options outlined below (infrastructure upgrade and service subsidy costs) in order to balance them against the wider costs and benefits they will bring through their impact on:

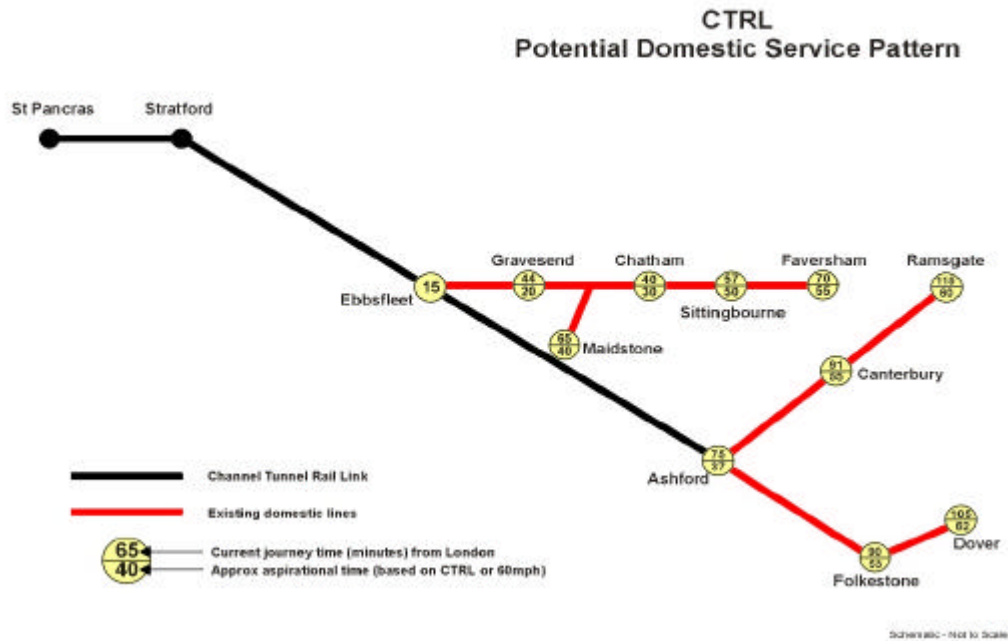
- the wider rail network (capacity, connectivity in and outside Kent)
- passenger franchises as a whole in Kent
- freight services (particularly capacity)
- integrated transport provision in Kent
- the economy
- the environment
- balance of development, particularly focusing on distortions that improved services to some areas (and not others) may create

Although there are a large number of possible CTRL domestic services solutions, there are two generic solutions:

Hub and spoke option - In this case CTRL trains would run to Ebbsfleet, Ashford and Folkestone, and other Kent towns would be connected to these hubs through regular services on existing lines.

Union Rail option - At the time of negotiations over CTRL in Government a solution was proposed which would see 8 peak and 4 off-peak CTRL pathways an hour used to serve a large number of key Kent towns in North, Mid and East Kent. Kent County Council has outlined its own version of this solution in 'A New Era for Kent's Railways' Kent County Council which is illustrated below:

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1.2. Introduction

1.2:1

This Select Committee was established to identify the views of stakeholders on the future of CTRL (D) domestic services and consider the wider implications for the Kent rail network. The Committee's terms of reference are attached in Appendix A and a full list of witnesses is also attached in Appendix B.

1.1:2

The Strategic Rail Authority has looked at the options for the future deployment of CTRL domestic services. The SRA have identified 5 options for CTRL domestic services after the planned opening of the complete CTRL line in 2007. These options have been identified on a strictly 'best value-for-money' basis in accordance with the SRA's remit; their recommendations have been passed to the Department for Transport. The Department is expected to announce its position within the next month ahead of a consultation process scheduled to take place during the first half of 2003. The Committee is taking this opportunity to summarise its preliminary findings, identify its position, and outline future topics for consideration.

1.2:3

In the preliminary stages of this review the Committee has focused on the issue of CTRL domestics. Specific issues such as freight, non-CTRL domestic services, and the broader issues of an integrated transport network and the affect of service patterns on patterns of demand and regeneration will be touched on here, but will require fuller consideration at a later stage.

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1.2:4

The Committee includes Members of Kent County Council and Medway Council (7:4). Decisions on the future of the rail of the network will have serious implications for the whole of the County of Kent not just those areas through which the CTRL line passes. As the largest conurbation in the County (with more growth planned) Medway already experiences serious shortcomings in its transport links to the KCC area and London. CTRL domestic services and their relation to the capacity and speed of the North Kent Line impact directly on road traffic congestion, and the quality of rail services across the North Kent Thames Gateway area.

1.2:5

CTRL domestic services on the North Kent Line and the East Kent Line to South and East Kent present the potential for an improvement in the level of service to these areas that currently experience unreliable services and lengthy journey times to London. This situation has been exacerbated first by the disruption caused by the imposition of Eurostar services on the already congested domestic lines and subsequently by the construction of the CTRL itself.

1.2:6

The Committee builds on a considerable amount of work already carried out. In September 2002 KCC hosted a forum of stakeholders to begin to identify a consensus on the demands that may be placed on CTRL Domestic services. The outcomes from this forum were represented in the document 'A Route to the Future' that outlines "Kent's understanding of the issues facing the future implementation of CTRL domestic services, the impact on the wider network, and Kent's expectations for investment in the network in coming years." Other sources that have contributed to this debate include research carried out on behalf of the East Kent Area Strategic Partnership by Steer, Davies, Gleave (August 2002) on the economic case for CTRL domestic services in East Kent; and the 2001 interim report by the KCC Strategic Planning Scrutiny Committee 'Rail Issues in Kent'.

1.2:7

All of the evidence gathered by the Select Committee, both written submissions and notes of evidence given in person are being collected in a separate volume that will accompany the Committee's final report. This will represent a significant and coherent collection of stakeholders' views on the future of the rail network.

1.2:8

The Committee has identified broad areas of argument to support Kent and Medway's case for the extension of CTRL domestic services beyond the CTRL. These are:

- a) CTRL and regeneration. During the construction of the CTRL Kent and Medway have suffered, and will continue to suffer, considerable disruption to the road and rail network and a related negative impact on the environment.

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Throughout this period there has been an expectation that in the long term the people of Kent and Medway will benefit from the potential for new services created by the link. Improvements to the network and the overall boost to the profile of rail services in Kent offered by newer, faster trains are an integral element in sustaining the growth of developing areas and fostering regeneration where lack of access to the rail network inhibits commuters and new business development.

- b) CTRL and the rail network. Kent's main arterial roads are congested and congestion will increase (growth in freight traffic crossing the Channel is rising at 16%p.a. and is expected to double in 7 years). Commuter links to London from Kent and Medway experience extreme congestion despite unattractive journey times. Development of the rail network, in part facilitated by increased capacity, needs to bring about a modal shift. Raising the quality of the network that has experienced long term under investment should also address connectivity within Kent. Existing service patterns are dictated by the demand for services to London. Enhancing connectivity within Kent and Medway could alter patterns of demand and reduce Kent – London congestion.

1.2:9

The Committee has taken evidence from a variety of stakeholders. These include all of the district councils in Kent (parishes have not been directly consulted), Train Operating Companies, business community representatives, the Rail Passenger Committee, and the SRA, Union Rail, and Network Rail. This evidence will be available in full in Volume 3, the following debate highlights the points raised in evidence received by the Committee.

1.3 Recommendations

1.3:1

Having heard all the evidence the Joint Select Committee believes strongly that CTRL Domestic services have the potential to improve the lives of thousands of people in Kent and Medway and should provide the best possible benefit to the people of Kent and Medway. Specifically, the Committee

- (i) (i) welcomes the consideration of options for enhancing services through CTRL Domestics including a spur to the North Kent Line at Ebbsfleet and also to Canterbury and Folkestone via Ashford

but would also

- (ii) urge the DfT to run CTRL Domestic services on the North Kent Line to Medway and Swale (including the enhancements necessary to increase capacity at Rochester Bridge as referred to in Recommendation 3 below), thereby unlocking the market of areas served by the North Kent Line beyond Gravesend,

and would also

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(iii) urge extension of services on the East Kent Line to Ramsgate via Canterbury.

1.3:2

Any option to extend services to Gravesend should include enhanced services to Rochester and Medway; failure to do this would only increase congestion on the roads from Medway/Sittingbourne/Faversham to Gravesend/Ebbsfleet/London. The Committee believes further research needs to be done to identify predicted levels of traffic congestion as a consequence of not extending services to Medway and beyond.

1.3:3

Increasing train capacity at Rochester and Strood through capital improvements in the form of a new bridge across the Medway and improved track layouts and signalling is fundamental to opening up the potential of the North Kent Line to the East and relieving existing pressures. Further research should be undertaken as a matter of urgency to identify amounts and sources of capital funding necessary for these improvements.

1.3:4

We would expect the SRA's investigation of options for CTRL Domestic services to take the benefits of regeneration into account. KCC/Medway's role in the consultation scheduled to take place in 2003 should emphasise the benefits of regeneration in the extension on CTRL Domestic services and also the benefits to the network, passenger and freight services which would result from capital improvements at Rochester Bridge and its approaches. Regeneration supported by CTRL Domestic services could also have a positive impact on demand for services; this should also be recognised in any future cost-benefit analyses.

1.3:5

The Department for Transport should also consider regeneration benefits alongside the best value-for-money options identified by the SRA. Regeneration in East Kent and in the Thames Gateway should be considered as a major driver in any decision on CTRL Domestic services.

1.3:6

The 'Union Rail' option identified in the Joint Select Committee's terms of reference does not include an analysis of existing and anticipated demand. Further work should be carried out to assess potential demand for CTRL Domestic services.

1.3:7

The Committee recognises that people, business and the environment in Kent and Medway have suffered for several years, and will continue to suffer, as a direct result of the work necessary to complete the CTRL and the disruption caused to the rail network. Recognition of this factor should be considered in future service patterns, and agreements. People have accepted the impact of

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the CTRL project in the expectation that CTRL Domestic Services would be available.

1.3:8

CTRL domestic services should not be considered in isolation, but the opportunity should be taken to upgrade and enhance the rail network throughout Kent and Medway to complement the introduction of CTRL Domestic services. Further work should be carried out with the Rail Passenger Committee to ensure that service patterns reflect the needs of consumers in the short term and longer term.

1.3:9

It is understood that the Department for Transport will publish its recommendations on CTRL Domestic Services in the near future. The Joint Select Committee, the County Council and Medway Council should be advised at the earliest opportunity of the timetable and mechanism for this consultation.

1.3:10

The number of vehicles carrying cross-channel freight traffic through Kent and Medway doubled in the years 1995-2001, and is set to double again in the next 15 years. The Joint Select Committee should now explore the relationship between freight and the necessary rail links to major ports such as Dover, Sheerness, Medway, and Ramsgate.

1.3:11

Where possible, without detriment to existing services and without the need for infrastructure upgrades, there should be domestic use of unused Eurostar pathways from Folkestone to Waterloo via Ashford, the CTRL phase 1 (when completed) and Fawkham Junction.

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Section 2

2.1 Regeneration

2.1:1

The Committee has identified regeneration as a fundamental driver of rail infrastructure development. This stance recognises the role of market pressures in determining infrastructure investment; however balanced economic growth across the KCC and Medway areas requires a comprehensive and integrated transport network

2.1:2

Faster, more frequent, better quality rail services are seen by many (particularly in East Kent and Medway) as being a key factor in stimulating economic development. Multiple deprivation in East Kent and Medway has already been well documented

“Thanet is KCC’s most deprived district which is the 60th most deprived Local Authority district in England

East/ West divide: The east of the County is more deprived. 35 out of the 50 most deprived wards (70%) in the KCC area are located in East Kent” (Deprivation in Kent, KCC 2000)”

2.1:3

Investment in rail services in East Kent that improve rail connectivity with the rest of the County and London is a necessary condition for economic development

“improvement of domestic rail services in East Kent remains the most important issue to be addressed in successfully realising economic development in the area. The partnership also believes that implementation of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link fast domestic services will provide the keystone to realise its economic development plans”(Domestic Rail Services On the CTRL in East Kent – The Economic Case Steer, Davies, Gleave report the East Kent Areas Strategic Partnership August 2002)

2.1:4

Key strategic bodies in East Kent have identified that economic development and the creation of employment opportunities is crucial in an area that experiences high levels of unemployment related deprivation.

“improved rail services can and will play a significant role in achieving the area’s economic and social regeneration and in delivering an integrated approach to transport in the region that will return passengers and freight to the rail network” (Paul Tipple, Head of Strategy and Development Wiggins Group Ltd/Chairman East Kent Rail Action Group 151102)

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2.1:5

In East Kent, and in Thanet in particular, growth at Manston Airport, and the direct and indirect opportunities it could create, are seen as vital; growth at Manston not only means more jobs but crucially more rail passengers.

“In [Thanet] Council’s view, the connection between through fast rail services and the development of the airport for passenger services, is both logical and economically viable both in terms of the development of the airport itself and of the wider East Kent region, which would benefit enormously from this twin track approach to developing the area and which would do so much for the economic and social regeneration of East Kent and of Thanet in particular”

(Trevor Heron, Thanet District Council 2002 “Future development of air transport in the UK – South East, appendix 2, The Future Potential of Manston Airport 1.5)

2.1:6

The relationship between growth at Manston and high-speed rail services is complex. Trevor Heron of Thanet District Council told the KCC Sub Regional Airports in Kent Review in May this year that the road network to Manston Airport could sustain growth up to a level of 1 million passengers p.a. Having reached this level the arguments for high-speed services to Thanet are more powerful, and the local community would be seen to benefit from the increased demand created by the Airport. However, with a high-speed link in place already the Airport would have a greater attraction to passengers and investors.

2.1:7

Pete Raine, Director of Strategic Planning, at KCC told the Committee that Kent suffers in transport terms because it is not on a through route to anywhere else in the UK. One of the specific issues for East Kent is its “peripherality”,

“a seamless domestic CTRL service is ... vital to the regeneration of East Kent as a whole. It would facilitate the shift both actually and in terms of perception, from seeing this part of the county as one that is peripheral to one that is fully integrated with the rest of the County, region and nation”(Richard Christian, Planning Officer Dover Harbour Board)

2.1:8

Medway has a population of ¼ million. The area is developing and growing but there continue to be pockets of deprivation. The Borough is part of the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership. The TGKP and Medway Council both recognise that transport in general and CTRL domestics in particular are important in the sustained regeneration of the area

“a high priority is to ensure that CTRL domestic services are developed from Ebbsfleet and that connecting services extend beyond Ebbsfleet

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itself to Medway and other areas of North Kent” (North Kent Area Investment Framework)

There is a concern that CTRL domestic services might not continue through to Medway

“the danger for us is that we will be perceived as beyond the end of the line. Now clearly that’s wrong in terms of economic development and wrong in terms of the status of Medway as an important community in Kent. But it could happen” (Dr Richard Simmons Director of Development and Environment Medway Council)

2.1:9

The social benefits of regeneration are not recognised in the modelling used by the SRA to identify best value options for future development, This was confirmed by Chris Clark in his evidence to the Committee.

“the requirements do not take in to account the regenerative element. It’s not part of the model that is used across all of government not just the SRA.”

Ed Vokes from the Thames Gateway Strategic Executive referred to the difficulties associated with measuring the benefits of regeneration.

“It’s a thorny question regarding what regeneration impacts you get from what regeneration improvements. At the moment the government really assess transport schemes on the basis of environmental grounds of safety grounds and the impact on the transport network in a wider sense such as a modal shift from car or lorry to public transport. We’ve been grappling with the idea about how regeneration impact can be measured. But there’s no definitive answer to say if you put X in then you get Y jobs. It’s fair to say that if you put in a transport scheme such as a station evidence would suggest that you do get greater levels of economic activity. As for measuring that there’s no real formula at the moment” (Ed Vokes TGSE)

In this context it may be useful to explore the criteria used by Steer, Davies, Gleave in their assessment of the economic case for CTRL domestic services in East Kent.

2.1:10

Chris Clark was clear in his evidence to the Committee that the SRA had no choice in the model they used to measure the costs of investment. However Ed Vokes, who is currently seconded to the TGSE, itself part of the ODPM said

“We share your concerns. We are in touch with the SRA and are lobbying quite firmly to include the regeneration benefits in schemes. There isn’t much more we can do apart from talk to people and let them know what

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the policies are. After all if regeneration of Thames Gateway is a Government policy as it was set out by the Deputy Prime Minister in his statement in July then the organisations such as the SRA really ought to pay attention. It 's government policy and it should be recognised that regeneration is something significant." (Ed Vokes TGSE)

2.2 North Kent Line

2.2:1

The North Kent Line (NKL) serves a great many towns in Medway and North and East Kent. The Mid-Kent Line joins the NKL in Strood, a service that goes to Victoria and Charing Cross via Swanley. This service also impacts on the congestion at Rochester Bridge and through the Medway Towns.

2.2:2

The speed and frequency of services has declined in recent years due to the disruption to the network caused by the construction of CTRL. Cllr Wozencroft has made the point that 10 years ago the journey from Medway to London took 33 minutes; it now takes 45 minutes (via the Mid Kent Line)

2.2:3

The line's capacity through Medway is structurally limited and has little potential for further expansion without significant capital expenditure on the Strood Tunnel and the Rochester Bridge Junction and other factors

"There's a limit to how many trains you can get from Strood in to the Medway towns and then beyond there in to the rest of North Kent. There's a problem with the capacity of the line right the way through Medway. It's just too narrow and limited and the signalling doesn't allow you to put enough trains through and there's a level crossing at Gillingham Road in Gillingham that is at full capacity" (Richard Simmons Director of Development and Environment Medway Council)

Medway Council is currently considering the Gillingham Road crossing as part of a wider review of traffic movements in Medway. However their consideration needs to refer to the potential benefits as identified by Connex, these have not yet been forthcoming.

2.2:4

Beyond Medway the North Kent Line also serves Swale and continues to Margate in Thanet. Swale Borough Council recognised the strategic importance of extending the link at least as far as Faversham. They emphasised

"the critical nature of the suggested Ebbsfleet to Faversham spur as this is imperative if the Borough is to maintain its attractiveness as a business location, to support the continued need for localised commuting within its population and for the Borough to contribute in the role envisaged for it in

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terms of the strategic planning of North Kent.”(Cllr. Andrew Bowles, Leader Swale Borough Council 121102)

2.2:5

It is likely that the further CTRL (D) trains run on the North Kent Line the poorer the cost/benefit ratio will become. As indicated above this needs to be weighed against the potential for demographic change, and regeneration.

2.2:6

An improvement to the services on the North Kent Line through the largest concentrations of population in Medway and North Kent is vital. London bound commuting on the A2 is congested and any failure to extend CTRL (D) services in to Medway will exacerbate this problem, as more commuters will travel by road to reach the nearest CTRL connection. Richard Simmons told the Committee that

“780000 journeys a year are made on commuter coach services between Medway and London. That’s partly a function of price but it’s also potentially lost business to the railway.” (Richard Simmons Director of Development and Environment Medway Council)

2.2:7

It is already known that there is a short fall in current rail services to Medway of 17000 seats per four-week period. The current constraints on the line mean that any extension of CTRL (D) services would not increase the overall number of headways per hour on the line.

“North Kent is quite a dilemma, if you assume that there’s no infrastructure improvements at all the first thing that would have to happen for any train to go beyond Ebbsfleet to the Medway towns will mean that existing trains will have to be taken out. Particularly at Rochester Bridge and all around the Medway towns the signalling will not allow an additional overlay of new services on existing services. So there would have to be a trade off somewhere of what services were taken out to provide pathway slots for the new CTRL domestic trains to go through...The further off of a high-speed rail the high-speed trains go on to a low speed current domestic network, the less commercial viability that service will have.” (Brian Rowley – Connex)

Journey timesaving on the NKL from Medway to London is not as significant as on journeys from East Kent but an increase in capacity is vital. Simply substituting existing services for CTRL (D) will not address the needs of commuters on the North Kent Line.

2.2:8

There are a variety of rail improvement initiatives proposed that will have an influence on the rail network in North Kent. The inter-relationships between these developments will have a bearing on CTRL(D). The eventual outcome of

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proposals such as Crossrail, Thameslink 2000 could open new or alternative potential.

“one of the major points that was made from Kent Thameside on consultation on Crossrail was that [the SRA] need to stop and have a radical look at the North Kent line as a whole.”(Brian Rowley – Connex)

2.2:9

In addition to these major developments the Committee learned that signalling improvements on the NKL scheduled to take place towards the end of this decade would only be a like for like improvement.

“Network rails plans on re-signalling are that the Medway towns are not due to be re-signalled until about 2010, and the Faversham/Sittingbourne area is due around 2008/9. But that is like for like; there is no enhancement in that scheme whatsoever. To lever in CTRL domestics us as an organisation and Network Rail would look to another organisation, a funder to build upgrades to get those trains through. Rather than them going through as a substitution.” (Brian Rowley, Connex)

2.2:10

Geoff Walters (Medway Public Transport Manager) raised the concern that the planned resignalling of the NKL should be considered as an opportunity to increase the lines capacity. Not using this opportunity was indicative of a ‘compartmentalised approach’; the DfT and the SRA should consider the upgrade of the line for CTRL (D) alongside expenditure already planned to maintain the existing standard of signalling. The alternative is to complete the resignalling as a project distinct from CTRL (D) only for the work to be superseded by subsequent upgrades for CTRL (D).

2.2:11

Brian Rowley from Connex discussed his concern that CTRL (D) services on the NKL, without an improvement to capacity, could cause wider problems for connectivity on the network in that area. CTRL (D) trains will need to run at speed to fulfil any of their potential benefits, without improvements to the line capacity the CTRL(D) pathways will effectively subtract from the existing services to intermediate stations.

“if the CTRL domestic trains are actually projected through the Medway towns we have to start looking at what options are available to us. If those trains do go through and there isn’t any re-signalling or upgrading of the route we will have to look at what options are available to us to ensure that connectability is maintained. We want to see a seamless railway in Kent with this improvement coming on; we don’t want to see any disjointedness coming in to the network. We think that there’s a lot of existing flows that could actually be disrupted if this wasn’t planned as integrated whole.” (Brian Rowley Connex)

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2.2:12

The Committee spoke to representatives of Dartford Borough Council and Gravesend Borough Council. Tim Lynch from Dartford recognised the current inadequacy of the capacity on the NKL

“I think the North Kent line gets a quart into a pint pot every morning.”

2.2:13

The discussion recognised that the planned growth in the Gateway area will place increasingly greater demands on the whole of the transport network

“Public transport is absolutely fundamental to making Kent Thameside work. We must not have loads more people coming in to the area and then expect them all to be able to use their cars all the time.” (Tony Chadwick)

2.2:14

During their presentation both representatives from Dartford and Gravesend emphasised the need to extend services on the NKL beyond Ebbsfleet at least in to Medway. They felt that there would be an increasing need for alternative patterns of demand as people commuted in to the opportunities created around Ebbsfleet and also to new opportunities further east on the North Kent Line.

2.2:15

There is a sympathy in the aspirations across the North Kent Thameside area, a recognition of the need for radically improved services to satisfy current demand and provide capacity to meet increased demand in the future. The presentation from Dartford and Gravesend did identify a potential conflict with the aspirations of Medway.

“Medway want to have – shall we call them - semi-fast services to Charing Cross but we want them to stop at every station.”(Tony Chadwick, Gravesend Borough Council)

This comment relates to services continuing on the North Kent Line to Charing Cross, particularly in providing a metro style service between Gravesend and Dartford and not the CTRL (D) trains. In practice, west of Strood, the only station likely to be missed by CTRL (D) trains is Higham, but stations on the CTRL itself will be widely spaced (St Pancras, Stratford, Ebbsfleet). Between Strood and Gillingham a consistent stopping pattern of trains will help to maximise the number passing through the area.

There is a concern that stopping the CTRL(D) at all intermediate stations will effectively negate the benefits of faster trains. Equally there may be a case that says to ensure the widest benefit and prevent road traffic from congesting the roads around the major stations trains should stop at intermediate stations.

2.2:16

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With reference to the way that the future case for CTRL should be made the presentation from Dartford and Gravesend indicated that a coherent business case should be researched and made

“I think what we are going to need to do is approach the SRA with a business approach i.e. ‘there are going to be so many passengers, going to be so much fares, that is the investment and its going to pay back over 30 years’ ”
(Tony Chadwick, Gravesend Borough Council)

This statement is echoed in written evidence from the Rail Passenger Committee who felt that whatever options were proposed for the Kent network should be evaluated, and costed with an assessment of demand.

2.3 East Kent Line

2.3:1

Discussion of the East Kent Line includes issues affecting the line to Ashford from Ebbsfleet and then on from Ashford to Folkestone and Dover on one spur, and on to Canterbury and Ramsgate on another.

2.3:2

Journey times from Thanet, as the furthestmost point of the EKL from London, are currently unacceptably long. The comparison has already been made between journey times from Ramsgate to London – a distance of some 70 miles and other towns of similar or greater distance from London on other lines that experience markedly shorter journey times.

2.3:3

The Committee received evidence from the three District Councils in the eastern section of the County – Dover, Thanet and Canterbury. These authorities have already done a considerable amount of work in partnership with local employers and KCC, who have combined together to form the East Kent Area Strategic Partnership (EK ASP). The ASP recently published research carried out by Steer, Davies, Gleave looking at the economic case for CTRL(D) in East Kent. Much of the discussion with representative of the ASP focused on the pressing need for rail services to East Kent to support regeneration and business development.

2.3:4

Richard Samuels (Chief Executive Thanet District Council) summarised the position of the partnership on CTRL (D)

“Rail services to East Kent are very poor, not just very poor but appalling frankly. The area has been left behind in the South East in terms of economic growth. The gap is actually widening. There are real opportunities for growth. We have very strong partnership agreements about what is needed. This is a once in a generation chance and if we can actually dramatically cut these journey times there will be substantial macro-economic benefits to East Kent.

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So it does make it a worthwhile investment with a very fast payback to the country as a whole. “ (Richard Samuels)

2.3:5

The relationship between faster journey times to East Kent, Manston Airport and regeneration has already been made. Richard Talbot from Network Rail made it clear during his discussion with the Committee the question of services directly to Manston is squarely the responsibility of the SRA

“we’re neutral on Manston. If someone comes along and says this is what we want you to do and we’re funding it and it fits in with the SRA’s strategic objectives then that’s what we’ll do (subject to resource availability)” (Richard Talbot , Network Rail 111102)

2.3:6

The business case for an extension of services in to Thanet is strengthened by the arguments made by the pharmaceuticals company Pfizer. Pfizer have estimated that the costs to them of poor rail connections to their base near Sandwich are almost £8m per year, with an additional £50 – 70m per year of investment moved out of Kent due to recruitment problems (Steer, Davies, Gleave 2002).

2.3:7

The regeneration case for extending the CTRL to East Kent has already been made here and in other documents (Steer, Davies, Gleave). But the point should be emphasised that the economic case for CTRL(D) services to East Kent raises issues of regional significance. Improving journey times to London from Thanet potentially evens the demand for housing across the County, rather than concentrating demand in those areas that already experience journey times that make commuting to London an attractive option.

2.3:8

As the Committee has seen the case for an extension of services can not be based on solely on regeneration. Dover Harbour and Manston Airport are, or have the potential to be, regionally and nationally significant parts of the transport infrastructure. Their economic contribution can not be ignored. The models used by Steere, Davies, Gleave to calculate the benefit to Kent of services in to East Kent should be considered for use in other areas such as North Kent.

2.3:9

The delays on the EKL to Canterbury and Thanet are in part a factor of the numerous level-crossings on the line. Canterbury City Council (Colin Carmichael, Chief Executive Canterbury City Council) have indicated that work needs to be done to address the problems of the line to Ashford that is currently limited by speed restrictions.

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“From the Canterbury perspective we are looking not only at the CTRL line itself but the absolute need to improve the investment on the line between Ashford and Canterbury West.”

2.3:10

Richard Talbot from Network Rail has indicated that for faster services through East Kent to be viable KCC as the Highways Authority will need to consider action to lessen the amount of crossings on the line. Richard Talbot went on to add that work is already scheduled to address upgrade the signalling on the line to modern standards

“We are also working on signalling between Ashford and Minster fitting AWS which is a fairly basic form of train protection. But such has been the neglect over several decades that there are some lines that don't even have the most basic of systems. Railtrack took a decision a couple of years ago that where the automatic warning system was not in place we would put in place. That's costing us 26 million pounds it also features upgrading of level crossings at Chilham Village and Chilham Rd. It's replacing semaphore signalling with coloured light signalling. And we are make provision for a new control centre at Canterbury West. And improving the signal spacing so that line speed could be improved to 85mph. Just by having to comply with modern standards we are providing improvements.” (Richard Talbot , Network Rail)

2.3:11

Dover District Council Chief Executive Nadeem Aziz made the case for a CTRL link to Dover via Folkestone. But also emphasised the need for connecting services that served the whole of the District and the wider East Kent area

“The real challenge is to make sure that the local services that we all rely on in our towns and villages actually connects to these hubs in an improved way. So improvements to the franchise operation and in particular Connex's performance remains central to this theme.” (Nadeem Aziz Managing Director Dover District Council)

2.3:12

The route from Dover to Folkestone passes under the Shakespeare Cliffs between the two towns. The existing tunnels are single-bore (1 tunnel each-way), these tunnels are so narrow that there is insufficient space for evacuation through the side doors from the high-speed trains should there be an emergency in the tunnel. As a result passenger trains passing through the tunnel must be built with exits at the front and rear.

2.3:13

Brian Rowley from Connex indicated that Connex have considered the needs of Dover and its outlying areas. Although they have not ruled out the possibility of a

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link to Dover, Connex recognise the difficulties associated with the tunnel and have identified a solution that assumes CTRL (D) services as far as Folkestone.

“We’re certainly aware that we want to see all the stations from Sandwich, Deal, Dover to have two trains per hour to Folkestone as a minimum. That’s what we’re looking for to start with. Unless we’re proved wrong with specification of the new train, we don’t believe there’s going to be end access doors that will prohibit them from going through Shakespeare tunnel to Dover” (Brian Rowley Connex)

In addition to this the loading gauge on the tunnel is such that freight traffic from Dover can not pass through either.

2.3:14

Dover District Council’s research has indicated that the cost of building a new tunnel to accommodate CTRL(D) services is in the region of £40m.

[there is] “the opportunity to make sure that in making capital investment we make sure to also look at the issue of ...Folkestone Tunnel, £40m is the estimate that we have, £40m to enable rail freight to connect up to what we believe is the country’s number one port where there is recognised and sustained growth that will result in a doubling of freight traffic in the next ten years. If we don’t do something that at least gives us the opportunity to begin taking some of those lorries off the roads and on to rail I think that will lead to local, regional and indeed national problems.” (Nadeem Aziz Managing Director, Dover District Council)

2.3:15

Direct passenger services, or overall journey times to London of under 1 hour would also have an impact on passenger services. John Turgoose (Marketing Manager Dover Harbour Board) told a previous KCC Select Committee review that many people in the UK and overseas perceived Kent as island to be hopped over on the way to the continent.

“I think it is easy to forget that actually already over a quarter of a million passengers, foot passengers, a year use those out of date services to get to Dover. Make that one hour and I suspect that the number of foot passengers connecting to the opportunity to cross the channel could increase substantially” (Nadeem Aziz, Managing Director, Dover District Council)

2.3:16

Work carried out by Shepway District Council indicates that if CTRL (D) services were to go to Folkestone Central and connect to shuttle services to Dover (journey time of 11 minutes) then the overall journey time from London could be an hour or slightly less.

2.3:17

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Shepway District Council has developed detailed proposals for a parkway station at Folkestone West and a new refurbished Central Station in addition to this they have identified land near the now disused Folkestone East suitable to be used as stabling and maintaining CTRL (D) trains. The Shepway proposals are linked to the regeneration of the town and Stephen Hagues (Strategic Planning Director Shepway District Council) referred to the positive affect that their plans are having on the town and the feedback they have received from the business community.

“Inward investors are telling us, existing companies are telling us ... one of the great problems of Folkestone is the problem of getting to and from London. It’s the transport infrastructure. If you could improve that service and, for example, the Chairman of SAGA Roger De Haan is saying that it will add tremendous value to his company and other businesses are saying the same. Portex in Hythe, exactly the same message. Get the transport infrastructure improved and that will aid the investment that we can put in to the town. Inward investors are giving us the same message.”
(Stephen Hagues, Strategic Planning Director Shepway District Council)

Preparatory work done by Shepway District Council indicates that the costs of continuing the CTRL (D) services from Ashford have been minimised as the existing line has already been upgraded as a safety measure to accommodate the Eurostar services.

2.3:18

The Committee spoke to Paul Clokie (Leader of Ashford Borough Council and David Hill Chief Executive. Councillor Clokie referred to the proposed growth of the town by 30000 or more houses during the next 30 years. The town already experiences a shortfall in the level of service at peak times, but does not experience some of the compounded difficulties experienced by commuters further down the line who need to make connections at Ashford.

Councillor Clokie raised a concern about the anticipated level of service to Ashford of 4 trains per hour during the peak periods.

“some of the ideas put forward to spread the flow from London on this fast rail out to Faversham and Ramsgate and so on would be a disadvantage from Ashford’s point of view.” (Paul Clokie)

2.3:19

This point is potentially at odds with other suggestions from areas to the East of Ashford and on the North Kent Line but reflects the concern that the massive growth predicted for the town needs to be factored in to any future plans. Ashford are also concerned that CTRL (D) pathways could be reduced from the existing 4 as international routes become more popular.

2.4 Maidstone

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2.4:1

Discussion of the issues affecting Maidstone and CTRL services does not fit neatly in to a discussion of the NKL or the EKL. The CTRL bypasses Maidstone on its way to Ebbsfleet from Ashford. Uncertainty continues to surround the role and extent of Thameslink 2000. The Committee's terms of reference include a suggestion that CTRL services should branch off of the NKL at Strood and reach Maidstone on the Medway Valley line.

This option has been considered by Connex in their proposals for CTRL services but as with all developments on the NKL is dependent on infrastructure developments on the NKL and the Medway Valley Line. If the Medway Valley line is upgraded 375 Express trains could run from Maidstone West via Strood to Gravesend for passengers to interchange on to CTRL (D) trains.

2.4:2

The Committee spoke to Trevor Gasson (planning Director Maidstone Borough Council) and Councillor Robinson. The Committee were told of the burgeoning development of Maidstone as a centre for business that needs to be served by fast efficient links to London in the short term, but also needs to exploit the potential of improving the link to Gatwick via West.

2.4:3

Journey times to London need to be improved; as does the availability of attractive London destinations but the broader issue will be the damage done to the perception of the town if it does benefit from improvements to the rail network

“If we don't connect to the CTRL, if we don't connect to Thameslink 2000, you end up with a County Town, a major economic hub ...which is very much a junior partner in the South East rail network” (Trevor Gasson, Planning Director Maidstone Borough Council)

2.5 Rolling Stock

2.5:1

The Committee spoke to Chris Clark from the SRA. Mr Clark spoke outlined the timetable for a decision on CTRL(D) services to the Committee. An important part of this timetable is the decision to order rolling stock. The SRA have researched options for the development of CTRL(D) services and the DfT are now making a decision on the options put forward

“We would expect a response from the department by the end of this year. Part of the recommendation is that the procurement of rolling stock and franchising be separated. Once that approval has been forthcoming we will then issue an OJEC notice to basically appoint a *ROSCO to procure rolling stock. The feedback we've had from manufacturers over the last year has been that it would require three years to physically construct the trains and about a year to commission them. So we're looking at a four-year period.”

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*The term ROSCO refers to rolling stock operating companies who own the rolling stock which is then leased to the Train Operating Companies (TOCs e.g. Connex).

2.5:2

The three-year time-scale caused the Committee some concern as a decision has yet to be made on where the services will operate. The most limited possibility for the future of CTRL (D) could see high speed trains operating only on the high speed line with over-head power supply; the Committee were concerned that there would be insufficient time to properly equip the trains should a more extensive service be employed.

However Mr Clark indicated that as the trains will need to use third rail powered lines to access servicing and maintenance facilities the new trains will need to be dual powered.

2.5:3

The Committee also spoke to Brian Rowley from Connex about their plans to refurbish and update the existing rolling stock to comply with the requirement to eliminate slam door trains by the autumn of 2004. Mr Rowley indicated that Connex have 55 new 375 units on order, 17 are already running and that number should soon be up to 33. This issue is complicated by safety concerns over automatic doors. The HMRI regulations indicate that automatic doors should not be used where platforms are not of sufficient length. Connex are currently developing trains with “selective-door” opening to comply with HMRI standards.

2.5:4

The Committee asked Mr Rowley to comment on the timescale for ordering new trains to run on the CTRL he replied that the the schedule would be “tight”. Mr Clark was asked what contingency plans were in place. He emphasised that although the new bespoke trains should be ready in time the SRA are exploring the possibility of using Eurostar trains, or Pendelino’s (as used by Virgin) although the necessary conversion costs would be prohibitive because Pendelino’s are not equipped with third rail DC power.

2.6 Infrastructure

2.6:1

There are a number of points throughout the network where there are unresolved issues that inhibit line capacity: Rochester Bridge Junction, Shakespeare Cliff Tunnel, level crossings on the East Kent Line between Ashford and Ramsgate via Canterbury. These issues can not all be resolved given the likely financial resources available to the SRA.

2.6:2

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It is clear that Rochester Bridge Junction is the single most significant factor that inhibits the development of services on the North Kent Line. Without improvements to capacity here Connex and the SRA have told the Committee that CTRL Domestic services on the North Kent Line would only replace existing services. Current track and signalling problems mean that no more than 12 trains per hour can pass through the Rochester Bridge Junction. Members of the Committee made the point that existing services from Medway and North Kent in to London are inadequate

2.6:3

The Union Rail option identified in the Committee's terms of reference recognised that there are significant difficulties associated with extending the CTRL domestic services beyond Folkestone to Dover. High-speed trains would be unable to safely pass through the single-bore tunnel because side access/exits could not be used in an emergency. Instead Dover and East Kent would be linked to Folkestone via connecting shuttle services.

2.6:4

Richard Talbot echoed Mr Walters earlier point that current renewal programmes should be assessed in the light of any deployment of CTRL (D) services.

"It is really for (SRA) to speak about what they want from domestic operation of Channel Tunnel Rail Link services we're just the contractor. But because we've got these renewals projects that's an absolutely ideal opportunity to build in any enhancements which are off the CTRL that were needed to support the operation of those domestic services. Those services ought to start operating in October 2007 but the SRA will confirm that." (Richard Talbot , Network Rail)

2.7 Modal Shift

2.7:1

One of the major concerns of the Committee is that CTRL (D) should be used to best affect to address the trend towards ever increasing road congestion across Kent and Medway. From Medway Richard Simmons evidence (referred to above) that indicated high levels of coach commuting from Medway to London suggested there is a direct link between inadequate services and traffic congestion

"We believe there's a latent demand for rail travel; if you look at the congestion on the M2/A2 corridor between Medway towns and London you will see in the morning and evening peaks that traffic is almost stationary" (Richard Simmons Director of Development and Environment Medway Council)

2.7:2

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There is also a concern that without CTRL (D) services on the North Kent Line road congestion will be increased as commuters from Medway would travel by car to Ebbsfleet, or the nearest CTRL (D) station, to pick up services.

“There’s an issue around the future use of Ebbsfleet station. Ebbsfleet will have very easy road access and very large amounts of car parking and if domestic services don’t extend to Chatham then there is the real potential for additional traffic congestion on the A2/M2 corridor. People will simply drive to Ebbsfleet and then catch the train from there, you have to really provide for rail heading these days” (Richard Simmons Director of Development and Environment Medway Council)

2.7:3

The issue of bringing about a shift in people’s patterns of behaviour also implies making services more attractive to use. Throughout Kent and Medway the aspiration is that CTRL services will be linked to substantial station refurbishment the Committee received evidence from around the County that criticised the poor quality of station facilities.

2.8 Freight

2.8:1

The issue of freight has a significant bearing on the need for a modal shift and is implicitly linked to issues of regeneration and economic development

“Freight through Dover is predicted to double over the next ten years. This brings significant economic benefits in terms of job security and creation, yet without the sustainability of rail freight, will result in gridlock on the road network, increase air quality problems, and jeopardise Kent’s ability to function as the UK’s principal gateway.” (Richard Christian, Planning Officer Dover Harbour Board)

2.8:2

Freight capacity is an issue across the rail network in Kent and Medway, without a shift in freight traffic from road to rail, road congestion will worsen exponentially

“If freight growth continues at its current rate then by 2020 we’re looking at a 73% increase in the Thames Gateway – which is roughly equivalent to about 34000 lorries per day.” (Ed Vokes TGSE)

2.8:3

This issue has such significance that the Select Committee will commence a review of the needs of the freight sector in the New Year. For this reason freight has only received the briefest of consideration in this review. The Committee is well aware of the need to consider the views of rail freight operators, all of the County’s port operators, and road hauliers and the wider business community.

2.8:4

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The Committee received evidence from the SRA that indicated an awareness of the serious issues affecting the County.

“From Kent’s point of view the most significant potential benefit of freight on CTRL has to be its potential for taking transiting HGV flows off the road system of the county, albeit that such benefits would be difficult to quantify with any real meaning at this stage. The benefits should become more apparent as the northern section of the route approaches completion and commercial interest ramps up. We are already aware of serious interest from a number of major freight and logistics operators on the route. It is a fact that much of the notional airfreight between the UK and mainland Europe is actually carried by HGVs via the Kent ferry ports, and the Eurotunnel HGV shuttle, transiting Kent en route. This is the sort of freight that would be ideal for fast rail services on CTRL and would align with SRA strategy and objectives.” (Jeff Miles SRA Freight)

Jeff Miles indicates that there are technical constraints that limit the capacity of the CTRL line but the SRA are engaged in ongoing discussion with Union Railways to optimise the capacity of the CTRL to carry freight.

2.8:5

It is unclear at this stage what the ultimate freight capacity of the CTRL will be and what alternative potential there will be on the rest of the network. These issues will be a part of the upcoming freight review.

2.9 Conclusions

2.9:1

The Select Committee has received evidence from a wide range of stakeholders in the Kent rail network. The County has a historical reliance on its rail network because of the high demand for commuter services in to London. In this context the fact that the current capacity of the network is wholly inadequate to meet existing demand is a disappointing indictment of past under investment.

2.9:2

Many of the witnesses that the Committee has spoken to have indicated the strong link between an extension of CTRL (D) and economic regeneration. It is perhaps unsurprising that a KCC/Medway Select Committee should conclude that the fullest possible extension of CTRL (D) services will best serve the needs of the people of Kent and Medway and the region. However this review has sought to look at the bigger picture, the wider implications of enhancements to the network or the costs of not improving services.

2.9:3

The regeneration benefits of network improvement are necessarily complex and difficult to calculate; they are, nonetheless, real. Rail services have an important role to play in improving the conditions for the growth and development of business and industry. From this there is a strong read-across to significant

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economic benefits which will address Kent and Medway's relative disadvantage in regional terms.

2.9:4

Kent's geographical position means that it is the entry point in to the country for high volumes of freight. This trend is increasing; unless action is taken to effect modal change the costs to the environment, to business, and to people, will be significant. And disproportionate; when compared to other parts of the region, or country that may experience congestion, Kent and Medway needs to secure some more benefit from its role as one of the nation's Gateways.

2.9:5

It is apparent that the potential exists for a significant improvement in the Kent network. The issue is complex and there are many possibilities. The Committee hope to continue the constructive dialogue with all stakeholders to identify realistic and achievable goals for the development of the network. These should be consistent with the ultimate aim of a fully integrated network, with clean, safe, modern stations and fast and efficient services which provide a credible alternative to road transport.

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Section 3

3.1 Recommendations

1.

Having heard all the evidence the Joint Select Committee believes strongly that CTRL Domestic services have the potential to improve the lives of thousands of people in Kent and Medway and should provide the best possible benefit to the people of Kent and Medway. Specifically, the Committee

(i) welcomes the consideration of options for enhancing services through CTRL Domestics including a spur to the North Kent Line at Ebbsfleet and also to Canterbury and Folkestone via Ashford

but would also

(ii) urge the DfT to run CTRL Domestic services on the North Kent Line to Medway and Swale (including the enhancements necessary to increase capacity at Rochester Bridge as referred to in Recommendation 3 below), thereby unlocking the market of areas served by the North Kent Line beyond Gravesend,

and would also

(iii) urge extension of services on the East Kent Line to Ramsgate via Canterbury.

2.

Any option to extend services to Gravesend should include enhanced services to Rochester and Medway. Failure to do this would increase congestion on the roads from Medway/Sittingbourne/Faversham to Gravesend/Ebbsfleet/London. The Committee believes further research needs to be done to identify predicted

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levels of traffic congestion as a consequence of not extending services to Medway and beyond.

3.

Increasing train capacity at Rochester and Strood through capital improvements in the form of a new bridge across the Medway and improved track layouts and signalling is fundamental to opening up the potential of the North Kent Line to the East and relieving existing pressures. Further research should be undertaken as a matter of urgency to identify amounts and sources of capital funding necessary for these improvements.

4.

We would expect the SRA's investigation of options for CTRL Domestic services to take the benefits of regeneration into account. KCC/Medway's role in the consultation scheduled to take place in 2003 should emphasise the benefits of regeneration in the extension on CTRL Domestic services and also the benefits to the network, passenger and freight services which would result from capital improvements at Rochester Bridge and its approaches. Regeneration supported by CTRL Domestics could also have a positive impact on demand for services; this should also be recognised in any future cost-benefit analyses.

5.

The Department for Transport should also consider regeneration benefits alongside the best value-for-money options identified by the SRA. Regeneration in East Kent and in the Thames Gateway should be considered as a major driver in any decision on CTRL Domestic services.

6.

The 'Union Rail' option identified in the Joint Select Committee's terms of reference does not include an analysis of existing and anticipated demand. Further work should be carried out to assess potential demand for CTRL Domestic services.

7.

The Committee recognises that people, business and the environment in Kent and Medway have suffered for several years, and will continue to suffer, as a direct result of the work necessary to complete the CTRL and the disruption caused to the rail network. Recognition of this factor should be considered in future service patterns, and agreements. People have accepted the impact of the CTRL project in the expectation that CTRL Domestic Services would be available.

8.

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CTRL domestic services should not be considered in isolation, but the opportunity should be taken to upgrade and enhance the rail network throughout Kent and Medway to complement the introduction of CTRL Domestic services. Further work should be carried out with the Rail Passenger Committee to ensure that service patterns reflect the needs of consumers in the short term and longer term.

9.

It is understood that the Department for Transport will publish its recommendations on CTRL Domestic Services in the near future. The Joint Select Committee, the County Council and Medway Council should be advised at the earliest opportunity of the timetable and mechanism for this consultation.

10.

The number of vehicles carrying cross-channel rail freight traffic through Kent and Medway doubled in the years 1995-2001, and is set to double again in the next 15 years. The Joint Select Committee should now explore the relationship between freight and the necessary rail links to major ports such as Dover, Sheerness, Medway, and Ramsgate.

11.

Where possible, without detriment to existing services and without the need for infrastructure upgrades, there should be domestic use of unused Eurostar pathways from Folkestone to Waterloo via Ashford, the CTRL phase 1 (when completed) and Fawkham Junction.

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Section 4

4.1 Appendices

4.1:1 *Committee members*

- Mrs. Cufley (Chair)
- Cllr. Andrews
- Mr. Birkett
- Mr. Chell
- Mr. Gibson
- Mr. Hayton
- Cllr. Jefferies
- Mr. Law
- Cllr. Munton
- Mr. Smythe
- Cllr. Wozencroft

4.1:2 *Witnesses*

- **Connex** - Brian Rowley Train Service Development Manager
- **Network Rail** - Richard Talbot External Development Manager, Railtrack Southern Region
- **Rail Passengers Committee**- Wendy Toms Chairman
- **SRA (Freight)**- Jeff Miles

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- **SRA (Passenger)**- Chris Clark
- **Thames Gateway Strategic Executive** - Ed Vokes Senior Transport Officer Essex County Council on secondment to ODPM working in the Urban Policy Unit serving the TGSE the partnership that oversees the regeneration of the Thames Gateway Area.
- **Union Railways** - Ted Allott,
- **Gravesham** Tony Chadwick Director of Planning and Transport
- **Dartford** Tim Lynch Transport Planning Manager
- **Swale** Chris Edwards Chief Executive
- **Canterbury** Colin Carmichael Chief Executive
- **Dover** Nadeem Aziz Managing Director
- **Thanet** Richard Samuel Chief Executive
- **Sevenoaks** Nigel Howells Chief Executive
- **Tonbridge & Malling**- David Hughes Chief Executive
- **Tunbridge Wells**- Rodney Stone Chief Executive
- **Maidstone**- Trevor Gasson Director of Development Services
- **Ashford**- David Hill Chief Executive
- **Shepway**- Stephen Hagues Strategic Planning Director
- **Pfizer**- John Elliott Acting Transport and Planning Manager
- **Eurotunnel**- Bill Dix Managing Director-Shuttle Services
- **Intercity Trucks**- John Faulkner
- **Dover Harbour Board**- Howard Holt Head of Corporate Affairs
- **Wiggins Group PLC** - Paul Tipple Head of Strategy & Development
- **Kent & Medway Economic Board** - Sir Graeme Odgers Chairman

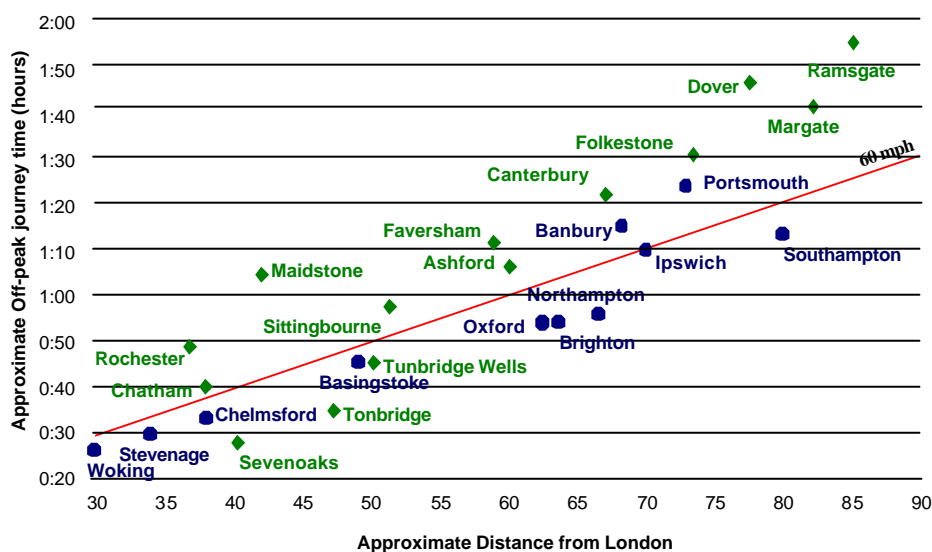
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4.1:3 A Route to the Future

This paper is a product of the Rail Forum held in Maidstone on September 20 for key private and public sector Kent stakeholders. It attempts to outline Kent's understanding of the issues facing implementation of CTRL domestic services, the impact on the wider network and Kent's expectations for investment in the network in the coming years. It has been agreed by both Kent County Council and Medway Council as the two strategic planning authorities for the sub-region.

Within Kent, there is widespread concern over the state of Kent's rail network, which has suffered from sustained under-investment compared with other areas of the UK. This is primarily a problem for Kent at the moment, but Kent's role as a gateway to Europe for both freight and passengers means that it will become a problem for London and the rest of the country in the near future.

The passenger network is characterised by old rolling stock, poor connectivity, within and outside Kent, and slow journey times to London (illustrated below) and within Kent.



Consequently, most people in Kent do not see rail as a viable alternative to the car, and, without a step change in the network, this is unlikely to change, making the passenger growth target in the 10 year Transport plan of 50% impossible to achieve in Kent.

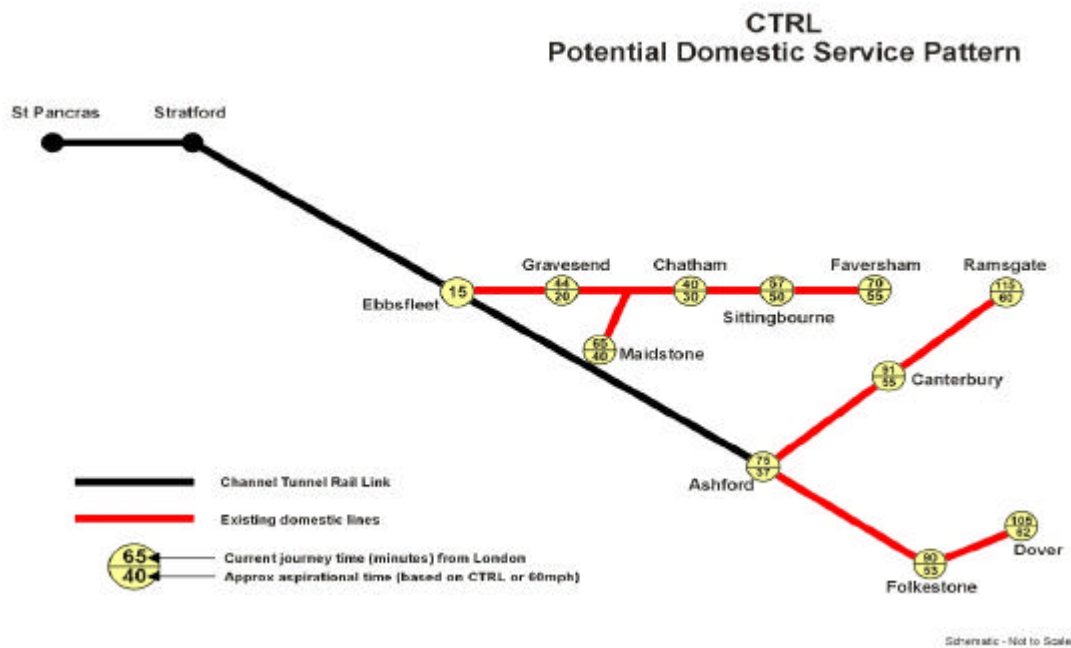
Kent, as a major gateway to mainland Europe, needs a strong rail freight network. However, rail connections to major ports are poor (there is no rail connection to the Port of Dover), and the loading gauge is lower than on major freight lines in other parts of the UK and on the continent. Consequently, the

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huge number of lorries travelling through Kent (3m last year) to mainland Europe, add to the strain on Kent's strategic roads. Currently, it is highly unlikely that Kent will be able to contribute to the Government's target of increasing rail freight by 80%.

The state of the network was an important factor in the decision to support CTRL construction. Eurostar and CTRL have had, and will continue to have, a significant negative impact on Kent's rail network and the environment. The final decision to support the construction of the CTRL, though, was made because Kent was given substantial guarantees during the parliamentary process about the compensatory benefits of CTRL domestic services. These benefits were believed to outweigh the costs.

The guarantees made to Kent centred on Union Railways domestic service patterns, 8 pathways during peak and 4 during off-peak periods, which would serve north, east and south Kent. Kent's preferred use of the pathways, which is based on the original Union Rail proposal, is outlined in 'A New Era for Kent Railways' – attached. The diagram below illustrates this solution and highlights indicative journey time savings which highlight why the CTRL domestic services solution was attractive.



The benefits that a commitment to this level of investment would to the Kent rail network are huge.

Rail Benefits - CTRL domestic services would create additional capacity on the network, which would benefit passenger and freight services.. More importantly, the significant journey time-savings CTRL domestic services offer, will alter people's perceptions of rail travel in Kent. This will play an essential role in encouraging people to use the wider network. For example, Shepway District Council's study suggested there would be a four-fold increase in London –

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Folkestone passenger levels. This kind of growth would develop the rail market creating a virtuous circle as perceptions change, demand increases and so the potential for new and improved services increases.

Wider Transport Benefits - The rail network should provide an alternative to the expansion of road networks as people who would normally use their car transfer to rail leaving more space on the roads for those journeys that cannot easily be made by train. Although this will not solve all the problem's on Kent's roads, it could make a significant impact on congestion at peak times by giving people who commute to London and between Kent towns a viable alternative to the car. Transferring freight from road to rail could have a similar impact on road congestion. HGVs currently make up 5% of the traffic on major roads but up to 16% on Kent's motorways, and they have a disproportionate impact on congestion and the need for roadworks and maintenance – another cause of congestion.

Economic benefits - Kent has a less vigorous economy than the rest of the south east. CTRL domestic services will support and act as a catalyst for developments outlined in Kent's well developed policy framework. This framework concentrates employment and housing growth over the next 20 years in Kent Thameside (North Kent), Ashford and Thanet-Sandwich the areas to be served by CTRL domestics. CTRL domestic services will improve connections to over 50 strategic business and housing development sites.

However, equally as important as supporting planned investment, is the impact CTRL domestic services will have on economic regeneration. Locations which attract new businesses are those with good access to London, convenient city-centre to city-centre business travel and offer a wide choice of connections to London airports and other transport hubs. Most Kent towns currently fail on these criteria.

CTRL domestic services are the first step to overcoming these barriers. The improved journey times to London will overcome the perception of Kent, particularly East Kent, as a remote location for business. All Kent towns could be within one hour of London, which is a real attraction for businesses considering relocating to Kent. Although it is impossible to put a final figure on the economic regeneration impact, the East Kent study carried out by Steer Davies Gleave, identified quantifiable benefits of £220 million a year, and highlighted a number of other benefits that are as yet unquantifiable.

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Social Benefits - These transport and economic benefits will also translate into social benefits. An improved network would bring health benefits and promote social independence. It will create new links from deprived urban areas to jobs and services in London and other towns in Kent as well as encouraging businesses to relocate. Therefore, it will increase the economic opportunities open to all and contribute to the Government's and KCC's shared objective of promoting social independence. It could also relieve pressure on affordable housing, offering key workers in London a viable alternative to living in London.

Environmental Benefits - An improved rail network would bring significant environmental benefits. CO₂ emissions per passenger km are 100 times less on passenger rail than in a car, and energy consumption for rail freight is at least 50% lower than for road transport.

Kent is very aware that CTRL domestic services will not solve all Kent's rail network problems. In the long term, Kent needs a passenger rail network that offers a viable alternative to the car for the people of Kent, allowing people to commute by train to London and between the major towns in Kent. It also needs a freight network that is able to expand to take a far larger proportion of trans-Kent freight; otherwise, Kent's key strategic roads will collapse under the strain. Currently, if the services through the Tunnel or Dover are disrupted the M20 can be backed up to Maidstone, in 2012, assuming lorry traffic doubles, the lorries could be backed up to the M25 causing severe traffic problems beyond Kent. This will require significant investment.

CTRL domestic services will provide a step change in services and create opportunities that would not otherwise occur. They are an essential part of achieving the wider vision. However, the current lack of information on CTRL domestic services, particularly the capital investment needed, make it very difficult to clarify how CTRL domestics should be implemented. It is impossible for local authorities to carry out cost/benefit or value for money analysis. In spite of this Kent has attempted to outline what a phased approach to overcoming this problem could look like:

Phase 1

Dialogue and consultation leading to agreement on:

- The need for a single train operating company to integrate CTRL domestic services with the existing network in order to maximise the benefits of CTRL investment
- The infrastructure investment needed to maximise the benefits from CTRL domestic services to the whole passenger network in Kent
- Agreement on the solutions that will help to move more freight from road to rail

Phase 2

- Integration of CTRL domestics and the South East passenger franchise
- Implementation of those CTRL domestic services which can be achieved without significant fixed infrastructure investment; for example, services to Thanet and Folkestone

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- Use of CTRL for freight services where appropriate
- International services from Ebbsfleet and Ashford and domestic use of Eurostar trains to these stations

Phase 3

- Major infrastructure projects (for example, Rochester Bridge junction capacity improvements) undertaken and CTRL domestic services rolled out to their full extent
- Begin to implement long term freight proposals to ensure a significant increase in the freight carried by rail

It is clear that CTRL domestic services provide an excellent opportunity for all Kent stakeholders to work together to secure significant rail infrastructure investment. It is also clear that there is considerable support for this approach among Kent's local authorities, key partnerships (such as the Kent Partnership and Kent and Medway Economic board), and in the private sector. These stakeholders are keen to support and work with the SRA to deliver CTRL domestic services, ensuring they bring maximum benefit to the whole network. They are also keen to work with the SRA to develop a long term shared vision for the future of the Kent network and a shared understanding of how it can be achieved over the next ten to twenty years.

Kent County Council on behalf of the Kent Rail Forum
September 2002